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Recorded Vol. 26. Page 234.

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“Yes, Fanny, that is it. God so orders it, in his providence, that the good are generally happy, and the wicked unhappy.”— See p. 58.

THE
GUIDING STAR;

OR,

THE BIBLE GOD'S MESSAGE.

DESIGNED TO ILLUSTRATE

THE SECOND AND THIRD QUESTIONS OF THE
WESTMINSTER CATECHISM.

BY

LOUISA PAYSON HOPKINS,

AUTHOR OF "THE PASTOR'S DAUGHTER," "HENRY LANGDON," ETC.

BOSTON:
GOULD AND LINCOLN,
59 WASHINGTON STREET.
1851.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

It may be necessary to explain the delay which has occurred in the publication of this series. The first number, entitled "Henry Langdon, or What was I made for?" appeared five years since, and a large portion of the present work was then ready for publication. The prosecution of the design has been interrupted by ill health; but the hope of being able to prepare other numbers of the series is not yet wholly abandoned.

L. P. H.

INTRODUCTION.

THE period of childhood is one of trust. Children must believe implicitly ; and it was evidently intended that they should receive instruction from their parents, in this way, on religious, no less than on other subjects. On this point the Bible is very explicit. Parents are made responsible for the correct belief of their children, just as they are for their good character ; and they may generally control the one as effectually as the other.

Christianity may be, and often is, thus received for a time, and may work its appropriate effects ; but to every thoughtful mind, the period of doubt, or, if not of doubt, of questioning, must come ; and happy is the child that is judiciously led from

this point to the firm ground of an intelligent belief. With very many this is a turning-point in their moral history, and practically, it would seem to be here, that the evidences of Christianity are most needed.

The age at which doubts may arise will vary with the capacity and circumstances of the child. It would not probably be wise to induce an early habit of questioning, on subjects of practical moment, because these can produce an effect on the heart only as they are fully received. It is "with the heart" that "man believeth to righteousness," and where this belief is strong enough to preclude or repress the questionings of the intellect, we would not ordinarily suggest difficulties for the sake of removing them; but when these arise, a full statement of them should be encouraged, and they should be candidly and fairly met, before any habit of distrust is formed.

It is just here, that we believe there is a great work for parents and the church yet to do; and

here it is that a book is needed, containing a statement of the chief points of the Christian evidences in their simplest and most attractive form. Such a book would be a great blessing to many parents themselves. It would confirm their own faith, while enabling them to resolve, far better than they otherwise would, those doubts which even children will often entertain and suggest. It may not be possible—it is not—to bring the whole subject within the reach of very young persons ; but the best answers may be given to such objections as they will be likely to make, and an adequate ground may be early furnished for a positive and rational belief.

But while there is evidently so much need of a work of this kind, the common treatises on the evidences do very little for its supply. They were written for another purpose, — are too elaborate and extended.

The following work, intended to supply the want indicated above, was commenced some

years since. It will be found to possess, in their full vigor, all those qualities which have given so wide a circulation to the previous works of the same writer. Ill health has prevented its completion until now. It is from the continuance of this ill health that these prefatory lines are written by the hand of another, who is confident that it is from something more than the partiality of friendship, that he anticipates for this work an extended usefulness.

M. H.

WILLIAMS COLLEGE,

May 9, 1851.

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

“I WONDER what we shall have to talk about, Sabbath evenings, this winter,” said Fanny to her brother James, one Sabbath, just after tea.

“I don’t know. Perhaps mother will let us choose a subject, as we did last winter,” said James.

“Yes, I dare say she will. But I should not know what to choose.”

“I should. There is something I have been curious about, ever since I rode in the stage with father to W——, last summer.”

“Is there, indeed?” said Fanny, rising from her half-recumbent position in the rocking-chair. “What is it? How strange that you should never have said anything about it before!”

“That is because there never seemed to

be a good time for it. You know we have been travelling all this fall, and there has been no opportunity for long talks."

"Very true. But do tell me what it is, and what your riding in the stage had to do with it."

"What I wish to know is, how to prove that the Bible is the word of God."

"What a strange question! Why, *of course* it is the word of God."

"It may seem of course to you, but it does not to everybody."

"How do you know?"

"Why, there was a man in the stage who said he did not believe a word of it, and that the writers of the Bible were a set of impostors."

"Why, James! how shocking! I have heard about infidels, and I suppose he was one?"

"Yes, father said so afterwards. But now how would you go to work to convince such a man that the Bible is inspired?"

"I am sure I don't know," said Fanny,

speaking slowly, and as if she were considering. "Why, you know it says in the Bible that holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. And there are other —"

"Yes, but they won't answer. An infidel would not mind what the Bible says about itself."

"No, of course he would not ; that was a foolish argument. Well, then, there are the prophecies, — they have been fulfilled, you know ; mother always makes us notice that, when we read history."

"But this man who talked in the stage would not allow that any prophecies had been fulfilled. In those cases where it appeared so, he said that the prophecies were written after the things happened."

"Did he ?" said Fanny, beginning to look puzzled and troubled. "But you don't believe what he said, do you ?"

"No, of course not. But still I should not know how to argue with such a man."

"Neither should I, I am sure. But how

strange it is that I never thought of that question before ! It is like my —— you remember, when father asked me why a stone thrown up into the air came down again, I was astonished that he should ask the reason for what appeared to me so plain. But when he insisted on my telling why, I could not give any reason, except that things always did so — which is no reason at all, you know.”

“Yes, and he told us, at the same time, how apt we are to suppose we understand a thing, if we have seen it happen a great many times, and are used to it.”

“Just as we are used to hearing the Bible spoken of as the word of God, and so take it for granted, without ever asking how it is known to be his word. I am very glad you thought of that question, James, though at first I did not suppose I should be interested in it.”

“I am not afraid of not being interested enough. But there is one thing I am a little afraid of.”

“What is that ?”

“Why, I am afraid the proof cannot be made out so clear as I should want to have it, if I were arguing with an infidel. I should want to have it as clear as daylight; and I am sure I do not see how it is to be made so; do you?”

“No; I don’t see anything about it now, especially as we cannot prove it from the Bible itself. But still, I do not feel afraid about it; father and mother would not believe it, unless it were true.”

“Here comes mother, at any rate,” said James. “Now we can ask her.”

The request was soon made, and as soon granted.

“But,” said their mother, “on one condition. I shall exact very close attention; for, without it, you will neither be interested in our conversations, nor profited by them.”

This was readily promised; and the next question was, when should they begin.

“This evening — now — may we not, mother?” said Fanny.

"No, my dear, I think not, and for two reasons. You know I never wish to give you information on any subject, till you have exercised your own minds about it. And then I shall wish to have time to think of the subject myself, and arrange what I have to say to you in proper order."

"But I don't know *how* to think about it, mother," said Fanny, mournfully; "I am sure I have not a thought in my head, and I don't believe James has."

"Well, my dear, do not look so dolorous about it," replied her mother, smiling. "I will tell you what two points I wish you especially to reflect upon during this week. The *first* is, whether it was *probable, beforehand*, that God, having created man, would make any revelation, or send any message to him. The *second* is, supposing him to make a revelation, what *tokens* or *signs* he could give, which would prove to men in all ages that it was from him."

Fanny looked rather perplexed. "May

we talk about it together, mother?" asked she.

"Certainly, as much as you like."

"Come, then, James; let us come into this corner of the room, and begin to think now."

CHAPTER II.

PROBABILITY OF A REVELATION.

“MOTHER, we have thought of ever so many things to say, about those questions you gave us,” said Fanny, the next Sabbath evening.

“Things to say! — questions to ask, I suppose you mean,” interposed James, in his usual rather blunt manner.

“Yes, questions; for we could not be sure that our thoughts were right.”

“Very well,” said their mother, smiling; “I shall be glad to listen to remarks, or answer inquiries, as may be required. So, you found a good deal to think about, did you?”

“Yes, mother, a great deal. We could not decide, at first, whether it was probable, beforehand, that God would make any rev-

elation to man. James thought it was; but it does not seem very clear to me."

"And why did you think so, James?"

"Because, mother, I cannot see why God should have made men at all, if he meant to leave them to themselves, and not have anything to do with them afterwards. I should think, if he made them, he would wish to govern them, and give them laws; and he could not do that without making a revelation."

"Very true, James. The supposition that God, after creating men, would leave them to themselves, and take no further interest in them, appears, then, to be inconsistent with his *wisdom*. And would it seem to be consistent with *benevolence*?"

"But, mother," interrupted Fanny, "I beg your pardon, — but please to stop a moment; there is something which puzzles me. I — I —"

"Well, my dear, go on."

"I cannot tell very well what I mean, but it seems to me that you are taking it for

granted that God is wise and good; yet how should we know it, without the Bible?"

"I see what you mean, my dear. Yes, I am taking it for granted that God is wise and good, because we have evidence enough of both these perfections, in his works; and every man who admits the *existence* of a God will admit it. The supposition that the vast universe was created by a *foolish* or a *malevolent* being is so perfectly absurd, that I believe no man can be found who entertains it."

"O yes, mother, I see I was wrong; I know well enough that God's wisdom and goodness are evident from his works, but I had got puzzled about it."

"I will now repeat my question. Would it be consistent with benevolence for God to leave men without a revelation?"

"I should think not," said James.

"Why not?"

"Why, if men cannot be happy without doing right, it must be necessary to their

happiness to know what is right. And a benevolent being would give them whatever was necessary for their happiness."

"But, then," said Fanny, "could they not have found out what was right, and what was wrong, for themselves? I thought conscience was given for that."

"So it is, my dear; but conscience, since man has fallen, is not an infallible guide. It needs to be enlightened by the word of God. There are some duties and some sins about which it leaves us very much in the dark; and even in regard to those duties which appear the plainest, as the reciprocal duties of parents and children, we find that men without the Bible have committed the greatest mistakes."

"Yes," said Fanny, "I remember that in heathen countries the parents very often kill their children as soon as they are born."

"And children kill their parents, when they are old and cannot work," said James, "by stuffing earth into their mouths, or by burying them alive."

“Yes,” observed his mother, “and we might easily spend the whole evening in mentioning facts which prove that a revelation was needed, to enable men to distinguish right from wrong. But this would be anticipating a point we shall come to again, by and by. Let us go on now to something else. Could anything have been known, with certainty, of the *immortality of the soul*, and a *future state of rewards and punishments*, without the Bible?”

Fanny looked doubtful. James answered, after a little hesitation, that he believed Plato and Cicero thought the soul was immortal.

“So they did,” said his mother; “or rather, so they *wished* to do. But their hopes and wishes were far from attaining to *certainty*, and these men were but two out of millions. The common people knew nothing of such a doctrine, and never could have known it, without the Bible. Much less did they know anything of a heaven or a hell,

at all resembling the heaven or hell of the Bible."

"And there is still another thing," said James, "which we could not have known without the Bible; we could not have known that there is a God."

"O James! I am sure we could. You forget what mother was saying about it this very evening, and how father is always talking to us about seeing God in his works."

"Yes, to be sure, now we know from the Bible that there is a God, it is very easy to find proofs of it in his works; but the question is, how much those poor, miserable heathen, who kill their children as soon as they are born — how much would they know about God, if they were left to themselves? What do you think, mother?"

"I think the question resolves itself into one of *facts*; — how much *do* those heathen know about him? What *is* known is the proper test of what *may* be known. It is vain to study the faculties of the mind, and

decide from them what man might discover of God; the question is, what *has* man, when left to himself, actually discovered? And if it is found that his conceptions have always been low, false and degraded, then it is evident that a clearer revelation was needed than that made in nature."

"But, I suppose the reason men have had such low conceptions of God, is because they are wicked," said James. "If man had remained innocent, he might, perhaps, have gained a true idea of God from studying nature. Don't you think so, mother?"

"All that *can* be learned from nature, he might have learned, certainly."

"Then, if men had not sinned, they would not have needed a revelation, would they?" asked Fanny.

"That does not follow with certainty. They certainly would not have needed one so much as they now do, nor for precisely the same reasons. But it is difficult to suppose that man, a finite and dependent creature, could ever have been happy without

some intercourse with his Maker. There is reason to conclude, even from the brief narrative we have in the Bible, that God did maintain a frequent and familiar intercourse with Adam before he sinned."

"And it seems to me very natural that he should," said James.

"But," continued his mother, "the most important reason why a revelation was needed has not been mentioned yet. There is one kind of knowledge necessary to fallen man which he could not have gained *at all* from the works of nature. Do you know what I mean?"

"I suppose you mean the knowledge of Jesus Christ," said James.

"Certainly; and without this, all other knowledge would be useless."

"But, according to that, mother," said Fanny, "all the people who lived *before* Christ, even the good people among the Jews, must have perished."

"Not so, my dear; for the Bible contained predictions of Christ, before he came.

You know Christ himself says, 'Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad.'"

"But still, mother, the predictions of Christ were so obscure —"

"Yes, they were obscure; but they were, no doubt, interpreted to believing hearts by the Spirit of God. Besides, it was not necessary that men should understand all about Christ, in order to be saved through him. It was enough that they knew, in general, that he was to make propitiation for sin."

"Mother, do you suppose that if one of the heathen should do the very best he could, according to what his conscience told him, he would be lost for not having heard of Christ?"

"I think the case of Cornelius is instructive on that point. He was a just man, and did his duty, so far as he knew it; and Peter was therefore sent to give him the instruction he needed about Christ. And Peter expressly declares that he had learned from this instance that, 'in whatsoever nation. he

that feareth God and doeth righteousness is accepted of him.' ”

“At any rate,” said James, “we have found reasons enough why a revelation was needed.”

“And if it was *needed*, then it was *probable*,” observed his mother.

“Yes,” said Fanny, “it seems very plain to me now.”

“The other question is still left,” said her mother, “and we will reserve it for next Sabbath evening.”

CHAPTER III.

WHAT SIGN COULD GOD GIVE TO AUTHENTICATE A MESSAGE FROM HIMSELF? — EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL EVIDENCES.

“MOTHER,” said Fanny, at their next meeting, “I do not see why any one should wish to deny that the Bible came from God.”

“I do, plain enough,” said James. “I am sure I have hardly been able to keep from wishing so myself, sometimes.”

“Why, James! What do you mean?”

“Why, when Mr. A. preaches such sermons as he did this morning, for instance, and makes it so plain that nobody can go to heaven who does not repent, and when I feel that I cannot repent, then I begin to think, ‘What if the Bible should not be true, after all?’ and if it were not wicked, I should wish that it were not.”

“O, James!” said Fanny; and after this she was silent. His mother was silent too,

pained, though not surprised, at this evidence of the state of her son's heart, and lifting up her soul in prayer to God that He would renew and sanctify him. After a time she said, "James has expressed the feelings of every unrenewed heart, when it is made to feel that the law of God breathes nothing but condemnation and wrath against the sinner. And you can see, in this way, how men become infidels. They begin by *wishing* the Bible were not true; and then they try to find arguments to prove that it is not so. You can easily see that if a wicked man were to make a Bible for himself, it would be a very different one from the Scriptures."

"I suppose," said Fanny, "it would let him do just what he liked."

"Yes, that has always been the character of pretended revelations. And if they have forbidden some indulgences, they have allowed others, to make up for it; as Mahomet did."

"Then, after all, mother," said Fanny, "it seems to me that this very thing is a

proof that the Bible is from God. For if it had been invented by men, they would have made such a one as they liked."

"Very true, my dear; I am glad you have made that reflection. And now, what have you to say about the question I gave you?"

"Why, mother, we could not think of anything; or, at least, we thought of a great many things, but they would not any of them *do*."

"Explain yourself more clearly, my dear."

"I mean we could not think of anything that God could give to men which would prove to them that the Bible was his word. Because, whatever he gave them, the men that lived afterwards, you know, might have denied that he did give it."

"Yes, unless it was something which God alone *could* give. But put out of your head the notion of a *thing*, in the first place, and consider what *power* God could have given to the writers of the Bible, which no other

men had, and which, therefore, would prove that their message was from him."

"What *power*? O, now I see! you mean the power of working miracles."

"Yes, that was a credential or token from God, — just as if your father, being absent, and wishing to send a message to me by a stranger, should give him a ring, or miniature, to show to me, which I knew to be in your father's possession."

"Yes, that would be an excellent plan," said Fanny.

"And, so far as we can see," added her mother, "it is the *only* credential God could have given, that would have been sufficient."

"The miracles might be a token to the people who saw them," said James; "but how could they be to the rest of the world, who have lived since?"

"Why," said Fanny, "those who saw them might write accounts of them, as they have done."

"Yes, but seeing a miracle is one thing,

and reading an account of it is another. For my part, I should not believe any account of a miracle that should be published in these days; I should want to see it with my own eyes. And you know what papa said, when Mr. B—— told him about the boy who was magnetized, and who did such wonderful things; — he said he should want the testimony of his own senses, before he could believe there was not some trick or mistake about it.”

“It is very true,” said his mother, “that more evidence is required to convince us of things in themselves improbable, or contrary to the common course of nature, than of those which are in accordance with our own experience. But there is an amount of evidence which would convince us that any event, however improbable in itself, really happened; and convince us as fully as the evidence of our senses would have done. Besides, the probability of a revelation being admitted, miracles are *not* improbable; since they furnish the only token

God could have given of the credibility of a revelation. And we shall soon see that there is a wide difference between the miracles of the Bible and the wonders of mesmerism, both as to their strangeness, and as to the amount of testimony in their favor."

"But there is another difficulty, still, mother. Other people, besides good men, have worked miracles sometimes. You know the magicians of Egypt did so."

"No; it is generally thought by learned men that there is nothing in the language of the Bible to authorize the belief that they really performed any miracles. They were a class of men whose business it was to counterfeit such wonders, by legerdemain, or sleight-of-hand; and to a certain point they could imitate in this way the wonders performed by Moses."

"O mother," said Fanny, "like that juggler we saw last winter, Signor — what's his name? — I am sure the things he did appeared like miracles. I could hardly be-

lieve the evidence of my own senses. Don't you remember, James, how he — ”

“ Yes, I remember all about it. But, then, after all, it does not make any difference whether men can *really* perform miracles without help from God, or whether they only appear to ; for, if people cannot distinguish between true and false miracles, they cannot know which are a sign or token from God, and which are not.”

“ All these objections anticipate what we are coming to by and by,” said his mother. “ In fact, I ought not to have given you that second question to think about, as it has led us out of the track I wish to follow. The train of thought suggested by our starting-point would lead us to consider the *internal* evidences first.”

“ Internal evidences ? What are they, mother ? ” asked Fanny.

“ To go back to the illustration we used before,” said her mother ; “ is there any other way in which I might know that a letter came from your father, besides its be-

ing accompanied by a ring, or some other outward token?"

"Why, yes, mother; you would know whether it was in his hand-writing or not."

"Yes, and whether it was his style or not," said James, — "whether it sounded like his other letters, and whether he wrote about our affairs as if he understood them."

"And if the letter revealed any traits of character," added his mother, "I might compare them with what I knew of your father's character. Well, now suppose that the hand-writing and style of the letter were your father's, exactly; that there was a perfect agreement in the sentiments and opinions and feelings, therein expressed, with those of your father; that it showed an intimate knowledge of all our concerns, and that it was moreover accompanied by a ring which I knew to be in your father's possession, — would not all these evidences together remove every doubt from my mind, and

convince me that the letter was what it purported to be ? ”

“Certainly, you could not doubt after that,” said James.

“These are the kinds of evidence we have that the Bible is from God; and all of them together, excepting the ring, constitute what are called the *internal* evidences. We have seen that a revelation was *probable*. We next advance a step further, and say, ‘Here is a book which professes to be such a revelation.’ Let us examine it, and see whether it bears those marks, internally, which we might expect in a revelation from God. And, as a preparation for the next conversation, you may try to find out what some of those marks are.”

“How much there will be to talk about !” exclaimed Fanny.

“Yes,” said James; “all I am afraid of is, that there will not be time to talk about them all.”

CHAPTER IV.

PLAN OF THE BOOK. DOES THE REVELATION MADE OF GOD
IN THE BIBLE HARMONIZE WITH THE REVELATION MADE
IN NATURE?

“WHAT a hard subject you gave us, mother!” said Fanny, as soon as they were seated, the next Sabbath evening. “There was so much to think of that I did not know where to begin, and never should have come to anything, if James had not helped me.”

“How did he help you?”

“Why, he said that the Bible was just the same as a letter from God to us; that is, it professes to be; and we can try it in the same way in which you said you could try a letter from father. But then, after all, most of the things you named about the letter would not apply at all here — handwriting and style, for instance.”

“Hand-writing, certainly not; but why not style? We might surely expect, in the style and composition of a message from God, some marks of sublimity not found in human productions.”

“Yes, to be sure, mother; so we might. But then again, as to the opinions and feelings and character, you know we could not tell —”

“Why, Fanny!” interrupted James, “you forget all that we said the other evening about the character of God being shown in his works. I am sure we can compare the Bible with nature, and see whether they both teach the same things.”

“Yes,” observed his mother, “that is the first particular named in the plan I have here;” unfolding a sheet of paper, as she spoke.

“What, mother, have you a written plan for our conversations?” asked Fanny.

“Yes, my dear, but you need not look so alarmed about it; there is nothing difficult

in it; or, at least, there is no difficulty which a little explanation will not easily remove."

"I am sure I am very glad there is a plan," said James; "I always like to go on in order."

"Yes, that is so like you!" said Fanny. "For my part, I like to ramble on, just as it happens. But, mother, will you please to read us your plan?"

"You will see that it embraces all the particulars you have named, and many others. You know we began by asking whether a revelation from God to man was *probable*, and decided that it was so. The next question is, What marks or tokens might be expected in a revelation from God? And,

I. We might expect that it would harmonize with those revelations of himself which God has already made; 1, In nature; 2, In man; 3, With those which he is constantly making in his Providence.

II. We might expect that all its parts would harmonize with each other.

III. We might expect that it would be

characterized by a sublimity and majesty not found in human compositions.

IV. We might expect that such a revelation would be specifically and exactly adapted to the wants of the beings to whom it is sent; that is, to the wants of men. These wants are —

1. *Clearer knowledge* — of himself — of God — and of duty.

2. *Pardon* — atonement.

3. Motives and aids to right-doing — *regeneration*.

If all these marks should be found in a book professing to be a revelation from God, we should have proof amounting to a moral demonstration that it was what it professed to be.”

“This, then, includes the whole of the proof, — the whole of what we are to talk about, — does it?” asked Fanny.

“No, my dear; this includes only the *internal* evidences: there is another class of evidences, which I shall take up afterwards. But, according to this plan, we are

to consider, this evening, whether the revelation respecting *God*, in the Bible, harmonizes with the revelation made of him in the works of nature. And first, as to the *unity* of God. The Bible, you know, teaches us that there is but one God, while the different systems of heathenism have a great many. Now, which should we conclude to be true, from nature ?”

After a pause of some length, James said he did not know. “I do not see, mother, how nature can teach anything about it. We know that the world must have been *made*; but why might it not have been made by a great many beings, as well as by one ?”

“Suppose you should be shown a vast and complicated piece of machinery, all the parts of which were nicely adapted and adjusted to each other, so that in all the intricate movements, and play of the parts, there was no confusion or jarring, but the whole worked harmoniously together to a

single end. Should you suppose it to be contrived by one mind, or by many?"

"By one, mother, certainly."

"In the same way we infer the unity of God from the works of creation. There is a correspondency, a harmony, between the parts, which proves that they were all the work of the same intelligence. The same mind which formed the eye also created light; the same being who created the atmosphere gave man lungs to breathe it, and blood to be purified by it."

"O yes! it seems very plain that the same being made everything, else they would not fit together so. But, then, as to the *perfections* of God, it does not seem to me—I mean, James was saying—and it seems so to me, too, that it is no proof of the Bible being from God, that it gives such a representation of him. Because, if people had *invented* the Bible, they would, of course, have made the character of God perfect."

"I beg your pardon, my dear. It is not so easy as you seem to think to *invent* a

perfect and infinite Being. It is very difficult for a depraved heart to conceive of infinite excellence, even when it is revealed; and quite impossible for it to imagine and represent such a being as the infinite Jehovah, without a revelation. If you would be convinced of this, you have only to look at the deities of pagan nations.”

“Yes, I remember I have read about Jupiter; — he was a miserable kind of god enough.”

“Yet the Greeks were the most refined, polished, and learned nation of antiquity; and Jupiter was about the best of their gods. It has been said of the pagan deities, ‘Some were vindictive and sanguinary, others were jealous, wrathful, or deceivers; and all of them were unchaste and adulterous. Not a few of them were monsters of the grossest vice and wickedness; and their rites were absurd, licentious and cruel, and often consisted of mere unmixed crime.’ Another writer says, ‘Their deities were worse than ordinary wicked *men* — full of ambition,

malice, cruelty, lust, deceit.' One was the god of thieves, another of war, a third of wine. Their histories are histories of crime and chicane, of pride and contention. Their supreme Jupiter is never introduced, but in the form of human folly, with human vices, and engaged in criminal human pursuits."

"But, mother, do you suppose people could really have approved and admired such things?" said James.

"No; that was probably out of the question. The philosophers ridiculed these gods; but the common people believed in them, and if they did not reverence them, had nothing to reverence. At any rate, we see what gods men invent for themselves, when they are left to their own folly."

"And yet, the Greeks and Romans were the most civilized people in the world!" said James.

"Yes, and as they went on advancing in civilization and refinement, they made no improvement whatever in the character of their deities. But now let us turn from

these gods of the heathen, to contemplate the God of revelation. What a contrast between Jehovah and these contemptible, cruel and revengeful deities! What majesty and dignity, in contrast with their littleness! What purity, in contrast with their defilement! What perfect truth, in contrast with their lying and fraud! What undeviating justice, in contrast with their caprice and cruelty! What mercy and forgiveness, in contrast with their malice and revenge! And how perfectly absurd is the supposition, that in the midst of such conceptions of the Deity as universally prevailed among the nations of antiquity, one man should have risen up like Moses, and promulgated such a view of the character of Jehovah as he has done, by the aid of his own faculties alone!"

"Yes, mother, I see that it is absurd," said Fanny. "I never thought of it before in that way."

"But let us examine more particularly how far the revelation of God, in the Bible,

harmonizes with what we learn from nature. In the first place, the Bible teaches us that God is infinite in *power* ; and what does nature say about it ?”

“Why, of course, he must have been infinitely powerful, to create all things, and uphold all things.”

“The Bible says that God is infinite in *wisdom* ; and what does nature say ?”

“If he had not been infinite in wisdom, he could not have contrived everything so beautifully and perfectly. O, I remember, father told us a great many things in which God’s wisdom is displayed ; and explained to us about our own bodies, and about different animals and insects, how wisely they are made. I was very much interested, and I wish he would teach us more about it.”

“The Bible says that God is infinitely *benevolent* ; how does this appear from his works ?”

“O, father told us about that, too ; he showed us how every part of our bodies was designed to produce pleasure, and not

pain. He told us how much pleasure we receive every day from the air and the light, from the use of our limbs and faculties, from the beautiful sky, and earth, and stars, and from loving each other; and he said that God might have made us so that we should not have enjoyed anything."

"But as to those two first things you named, mother, power and wisdom, I suppose," said James, "that even the heathen had right notions about them; that is, they believed their gods to be powerful and wise, did they not?"

"Yes, but their notions were very defective, even in relation to these attributes. If there are *many* gods, who divide the sovereignty of the universe between them, it is impossible that there should be one all-powerful God. Their notion of *power* was that of mere force, kept in check by other forces, and subject, even in the case of Jupiter himself, to the control of Fate. Such an attribute had nothing in common with the omnipotence of the God of the Bible, — power

unlimited, and governed by benevolence. The same remarks apply to *knowledge* and *wisdom*. The deities of the heathen possess a very limited knowledge; they may be, and often are, deceived; and their *wisdom* might more properly be called *cunning*. In fact, the absence of one attribute, *benevolence*, modifies and alters all the others, such as power and knowledge, which have no moral character, — that is, are neither good nor bad in themselves.”

“But, mother,” said James, “you say that we can discover all these things from nature, and that the agreement between what we learn of God from nature, and what we learn of him from the Bible, is a proof of the truth of the Bible. And yet, you say that the heathen did *not* learn these things from nature, and that their notions of God were entirely wrong and foolish.”

“Very true, James. But, then, it does not follow that man, fallen man, *will* do what he *might* do. The perfections of God are so clearly written on his works, that the

heathen *might* have known him from them, as Paul says: 'For the invisible things of him, namely, his eternal power and god-head, were clearly seen, from the creation of the world;' that is, they were clearly *to be* seen. But men were blinded by their wickedness, and did not choose to see them. Besides, it is much easier, now that these perfections *are* revealed, to discover confirmations of them from nature, than to guess them out, at first, entirely from nature."

"Yes, so it is; I thought of that before."

"And now I will conclude the conversation, by reading a few sentences written by the great and good Dr. Dwight. Sometime I hope you will read all his works for yourselves. Speaking of Jehovah, he says,— 'What an amazing character is here manifested to our view! JEHOVAH, the self-existent, eternal, immutable, omnipresent, omniscient, almighty, and independent; the only good, just, faithful, true, merciful and wise; the maker, the preserver, the benefactor and the ruler of all things; to whom be glory

for ever and ever ! What a character, what a being, is this ! How do all creatures, in his presence, and in comparison with his greatness and perfection, shrink into nothing, and become justly counted by him as less than nothing, and vanity ! How truly, how suitably to his character, does he say, *I am, and there is none else !*’

“There are other perfections of God taught in the Bible, which we do not discover from *nature*, strictly speaking, but which are revealed in God’s providential government of the world. However, the subject of our next conversation will be, the harmony between God’s revelation of himself in the *soul of man*, and in the Bible.”

CHAPTER V.

DOES THE SOUL OF MAN BEAR EVIDENT MARKS OF HAVING
SPRUNG FROM THE GOD OF THE BIBLE?

“MOTHER,” said Fanny, “I think our conversations have done me good in one way, already.”

“How is that, Fanny?”

“Why, they make me read the Bible so much more attentively. All the last week I was thinking of what we were to talk about to-night; and it made me notice a great many things in the Bible which I had read before without minding them.”

“That is one good result, certainly,” said her mother. “But I hope, my dear Fanny, that other and more important results will follow, from our conversations; if I did not, I should consider the time unprofitably spent. For you know that an increase of knowledge alone will be of no advantage to you,

unless that knowledge influences your conduct. I hope you may be led to *love* and *obey* the Bible, as well as to understand its claims. The question, whether the Bible is the word of God, is not a mere question of curiosity; it is one of the highest practical importance to all of us. If it *is* the word of God, we are sinners; we are condemned already; the sentence of the law has been uttered; there is but one way of escape. If it *is* the word of God, our eternal destiny depends on the manner in which we treat it. Every time that its claims are presented and you refuse to yield to them, you incur additional guilt, and increase the hardness of your heart. These conversations, therefore, will not leave you as they found you; they must either benefit or injure you."

Fanny and James looked and felt very serious. After a pause, their mother resumed :

"Have you anything to say respecting our subject of conversation for this evening?"

“Why, mother,” said Fanny, “we could not understand very well what you meant.”

“I thought,” said James, “that if you meant to ask how God’s perfections are shown in the creation of man, you would have put that with our last subject; for man is a part of nature.”

“Yes, man is a part of nature, in one sense, it is true. At the same time, there is a broad distinction between man and the other works of God; and the nature of the proof I wish to draw from this source is quite different from that we considered last week. I can put the question in a simple form, so that you will understand it. How does it appear that the same being who created the human soul is the author of the Bible?”

“Is this the right answer?” said James, after thinking a while — “that our consciences approve and disapprove the same things which the Bible approves and disapproves?”

“Yes, that is part of the answer, and it

seems to me a very strong evidence. Suppose, for a moment, that we could lay aside all knowledge of God acquired from the Bible or from nature; and that we should then examine the soul of man, to discover something of its author. It seems to me that man's intellectual and moral faculties both point to such a God as the Bible reveals."

"I partly understand you, mother," said James; "but please to explain what you mean more fully."

"Take, then, man's intellectual faculties, — those by the aid of which he *knows, thinks, imagines, reasons*. How evident it is that they were made to be employed about an infinite object! How eagerly they travel on, climbing from height to height, and are never satisfied till they have found something without limits! How evident it is that these powers could never attain rest or enjoyment in the worship of degraded, finite, and imperfect deities; or in the enjoyments of a sensual paradise! How certain does it appear that they can find their end and aim

only in the perfect, eternal, and infinite Jehovah !”

“ Yes, I see that it is so,” said James.

“ Then, if we consider man as a creature of the affections, capable of *loving*, we are led to the same result. As his *mind* requires an infinite object to *know*, so his *heart* requires an infinite object to *love*. It is certain that the soul can never be satisfied, so long as its affections are fastened on perishable, imperfect and limited objects. It is equally certain that the highest bliss which we can know or conceive of must flow from an interchange of affection with a being absolutely and supremely worthy of love in himself, and possessing also claims to our warmest *gratitude*. Now, the God revealed in the Bible is such a Being, — how perfectly unlike the gods whom heathen nations pretended to worship, but whom they could not even *pretend* to love, I need not again remind you.”

“ Sure enough, — nobody could have thought of *loving* their gods !” said Fanny.

“Then, once more, as to the conscience. Conscience utters the same language with the Bible. - Wherever she is allowed to speak her natural, unperturbed decisions, they harmonize perfectly with the precepts of the moral law. And, however men may seek to blind or to silence her, they feel her scorpion whips in the dead of night, if they venture to transgress the words of Jehovah.”

“But, then, mother, you know that is not always so; because people, and sometimes whole nations, succeed in persuading themselves that things are right which the Bible forbids, and then their consciences do not reprove them.”

“That is true; but still it is not difficult to distinguish the judgments of natural, unperturbed conscience, from those false decisions she sometimes pronounces. A man who, in the possession of his reason, visits an insane asylum, does not doubt his own sanity, because all around him see things differently from himself. We know, that in relation to all important and fundamental

duties, the consciences of men speak alike ; and even where certain crimes are universal, as among some heathen nations, there is no reason to suppose that their consciences approve those crimes. But how is it, you may ask, that conscience is capable of being perverted ? If God has placed her in the soul as an arbiter of right and wrong, why are her decisions ever erroneous ? And this question we could not answer, if the Bible had not given us an account of the *fall* of man from his original state of innocence. So that here an apparent objection becomes an argument in favor of the Bible. There is in man a mixture of good and evil, of great and little, which can be accounted for in *no other way* than by receiving the Biblical account of his creation and fall. He still retains enough of his original brightness to show what he was, as he came from the hands of the Creator ; while this brightness is so dimmed and sullied by sin, that to an observer without the guiding light of inspiration he must appear an inexplicable

riddle. Justly has he been compared to a temple in ruins. He admires and approves the good, yet follows the evil. His soul seems to be torn by an intestine war — passion and conscience each striving for the mastery, which neither fully obtains. Well may he be lost in perplexity at himself, until he opens the volume of inspiration; and well may the wonderful light which beams upon him from its pages convince him that it is the work of one who ‘needeth not that any should testify of man, for he knoweth what is in man.’ ”

“Yes,” said James, thoughtfully, “it seems to me that this is a very convincing argument.”

“And it is one,” added his mother, “which can be understood and felt by every man who has ever looked into himself enough to know his own character. It does not require any learning or talent, to be appreciated. Accordingly, it is found that no argument is more convincing to men who are convinced of sin, while in a state of scepticism about

revelation, than this. Most men are so ignorant of themselves that they do not feel the force of this argument; but let the Spirit of God enter a man's heart, and convince him of his sinful and ruined state, and then he *feels* the truth of the Bible. Every line seems to flash evidence upon him; the secrets of his heart are made manifest, and he is in the same state of mind with the woman of Sychar, when she exclaimed, 'Come see a man which told me all things that ever I did; — is not this the Christ?'

"I remember," said Fanny, "I have read anecdotes about wicked men, who went by accident to a meeting, and who thought the minister had heard about them, and that his text and sermon were made on purpose for them."

"Such instances are not very uncommon," said her mother. "There is still another fact which shows that the same Being who created the soul of man originated the Bible. It is this: the Bible solves for men a problem which they are unable to

solve for themselves; it tells them just what will make them happy."

Fanny looked as if she did not quite see the force of this remark.

"Suppose," said her mother, "a box had been given you, which had a lock of very curious construction, but no key. Suppose that hundreds of people should come, one after the other, with keys which they pretended would open it, but every one failed. At last there comes a man with a key which opens the wonderful lock, as if by magic, at the first touch. Would you not feel quite certain that he was the contriver of the lock?"

"Yes, mother, I think I should."

"Well, now, men in all ages have been seeking happiness. One says, try this method of obtaining it, and another says, try that; but all confess that they have not found it. The Bible alone contains the secret, and just the secret, which men would never have found for themselves. It says, 'Do right; deny your appetites and passions; renounce

your own will, and submit to the will of God; become as little children;' and every man who has followed these directions confesses that he has found the secret of happiness. But we must bring our conversation to a close. Our next subject is, *The harmony between the Bible and the course of Providence.*"

"That sounds difficult," said Fanny; "I do not believe I shall understand it."

"Yes, you will, my dear. The course of Providence means the *order of events* which takes place in the world, and in life. You can see that it would be possible, by observing the conduct of a *ruler*, to determine by what principles he was governed. Now, God, as a wise Ruler, must be regulated by certain fixed principles, in the government of the universe. Our business, then, will be, to determine, from his acts, what these principles are, and then compare them with what the Bible teaches on the same subject. Do you understand me?"

"Yes, mother, very well."

CHAPTER VI.

DOES THE BIBLE HARMONIZE WITH THE REVELATION MADE
OF GOD IN THE COURSE OF PROVIDENCE?

“MOTHER,” said Fanny, “I believe I have found out one thing you mean, — one principle according to which God governs the universe; and I am very glad that I found it out without James helping me. Isn’t it that one you spoke of some time ago — that he punishes the wicked and rewards the good?”

“Yes, Fanny, that is it. God so orders it, in his providence, that the good are generally happy, and the wicked unhappy.”

“But, then, mother, it is not always so. I know some wicked men who seem to have all they want; and good men are often poor and distressed.”

“That is true; but you will see, by and

by, that these apparent exceptions only confirm the rule. At present, let us consider the principle, and see of how wide application it is. Observe how surely sloth, and intemperance, and extravagance, and dissipation, are punished, by poverty, and sickness, and contempt. *As a general thing*, a man that is honest in his dealings, just and kind to his neighbors, a good father, a good husband, and a good citizen, is prosperous in his business, beloved by his family, respected by society, and approved by his conscience. *As a general thing*, a man who is dishonest in trade, unjust to his dependents, or unkind to his family, is suspected, disliked, and avoided by all men; while his ill-gotten gains 'take to themselves wings, and fly away.' You are both young, and have seen so little of the world, that you cannot have observed these facts for yourselves; therefore, you must be content to take them on the testimony of others. But you can tell whether this principle is in accordance with what the Bible teaches us

of God's feelings and conduct towards the righteous and wicked."

"Yes, I am sure it is," said Fanny; "the Bible is full of texts about God's loving and rewarding good men, and about his punishing wicked men. I believe I could find a thousand."

"I know it," said James, "and I think what mother has said is true *in general*, as she stated it; but I do not see how she is going to get over the difficulty, — the exception I spoke of."

"I will tell you, my dear," said his mother. "If this world were a state of *reward*, then it would be necessary that God should *in all cases* make the righteous happy, and the wicked miserable. But, on the supposition that this life is a state of *trial*, of *discipline*, we should not expect any such uniformity of treatment. For, consider what is implied in a state of probation and discipline. It implies the existence of *incitements both to good and evil*; and of a *freedom of choice* between good and evil. Now, suppose

that punishment *always* and *immediately* followed transgression. Suppose the profane swearer was *always* struck to the ground by lightning, the moment an oath escaped his lips ;—suppose the earth opened to swallow up the murderer, the moment his work of death was done ;—suppose the pestilence was sure to smite the drunkard or the adulterer ;—do you not see that this would be no longer a state of trial ? Men would not *dare* to commit the outward sin, while the sword thus hung suspended over their heads ; but it would be in their hearts, nevertheless. It would be as if your father ordered you, James, to do a certain piece of work, and then stood over you with a horse-whip to enforce obedience. Of course, it would be no test of your obedience, — no *trial* of you, in any sense.”

“ Yes, mother, that is perfectly plain.”

“ Now, if the Bible had not told us that this world is a state of trial, we might have been at a loss to understand a great many things in the government of God. We might

have wondered why punishment was ever delayed; and why the wicked sometimes seem to triumph, and the good to suffer. In fact, this state of things *did* fill some of the reflecting heathen with surprise. They felt that there *must* be some way of accounting for the seeming want of justice in the treatment which men receive. Now, the Bible comes in to explain the difficulty. It presents a *perfect* and *absolute* solution of it, and the only solution possible. It tells us that there is to be another state, of *retribution*, as this is a state of *trial*; and that, in that state, all these seeming errors will be rectified, — the good finally rewarded, and the wicked finally punished. The Bible, therefore, harmonizes *perfectly* with the course of Providence, and explains what would otherwise be mysterious in it. Is all this clear to you?"

"Perfectly so," replied James and Fanny together.

"It seems to me this is the strongest ar-

gument we have had yet, for the truth of the Bible," added James.

"Some arguments have more weight for some minds, and some for others," said his mother. "However, I have omitted one thing. I intended to say further on this point, in answer to your remark, Fanny, that the good are not always happy, nor the wicked always miserable. You say that good men are sometimes poor and afflicted, and bad men are sometimes prosperous. But *happiness* depends on other things, more than on riches and prosperity. Do you not suppose that Paul and Silas were happy in their dungeon, when they prayed and sang praises to God, so loud that the prisoners heard them?"

"Yes, mother."

"And how was it with Judas, when he had received the thirty pieces of silver for betraying his master? — was he happy? could he enjoy his gains?"

"No, mother; he was so full of remorse that he went away and hung himself."

“You see, then, that God can make men happy, in the absence of all outward comforts; and he can fill a man with misery, so that he shall loathe his life, while surrounded with every luxury. Every man who has lived long knows this, and even children experience something of it. I dare say you can remember times when you were perfectly wretched, merely from having done wrong, without any outward cause of uneasiness.”

“Yes, I am sure I can,” said Fanny, in a low voice.

“There are other points of analogy between the providential government of God and the principles of his government as made known in the Bible, which we shall have to notice very briefly. One is, that a considerable time often intervenes between the punishment and the offence. We are told, in the Bible, that a day is coming in which God will judge the world. But, meantime, sinners go on as they please, and mock, saying, Where is the promise of

his coming? Now, it is the same in Providence. A man commits a murder, we will suppose, and it is not known. He lives on for years, without detection; but at last the moment of detection arrives. In some unexpected and surprising manner, his crime is brought to light, and he gives up his life on the gallows.

“Another point of analogy is this: We find, from the Bible, that *repentance*, alone, has no power to atone for sin. If Christ had not died, and by his death made an atonement for sin, our repentance would have done no good; God could not have pardoned us.”

“But why not?” said Fanny; “that seems strange.”

“Reflect a moment: suppose that the King of England, or the Congress of the United States, makes a law,—a law forbidding murder, for instance,—and annexes death as the penalty. Suppose that, instead of inflicting this penalty, they pardon every murderer, as soon as he professes repentance

for his crime ; what do you suppose would be the consequence ?”

“O, I see that it would never do ; nobody would be afraid to kill another, then ; and besides, they would see that the law-maker had not kept his word.”

“Very well ; the same consequences would have followed, if God had remitted the penalty threatened against sin, on repentance. But what I was going to say is, that the same fact is exhibited in the daily course of Providence. If a man injures his health, for example, by misconduct in youth, no matter how sincerely he may repent afterwards, he cannot avert the consequences. A man may, by a single act, entail upon himself suffering and disgrace for all the rest of his life, without any possibility of escape.”

“How dreadful that seems !” said Fanny.

“Yes ; and how it harmonizes with another dreadful fact, revealed in the Bible, — that a man may make sure the loss of his *soul*, so that nothing can avert it ! Another

point of harmony between the course of Providence and revealed religion, may be found in the fact that the same conduct which is enjoined by one, as necessary to secure our *temporal* interests, is inculcated by the other, as tending to our *eternal* happiness. For instance, the Bible requires sobriety, temperance, moderation, self-control, justice, honesty and charity. Now, on considering human life, and the history of mankind, we find that these are the very qualities which a man must possess and exhibit, in order to secure competence, health, tranquillity and honor, in this life. And there cannot be a single thing named which enlightened *self-interest* requires of men, which is not also inculcated in the Bible."

"That is very curious and interesting," said James; "I should like to think more about that."

"I advise you to think about it, and also more about the general subject of our conversation, for it is not half exhausted; and yet, we must stop here. When you are

older, you will read a work in which you will find all these points, and others of a similar kind, fully illustrated. It is Butler's 'Analogy of Religion to the Course of Nature.' Our next inquiry will be, whether all the parts of the Bible *harmonize with each other.*"

CHAPTER VII.

THE HARMONY BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE SACRED WRITINGS IS A STRONG EVIDENCE OF THEIR CREDIBILITY.

FANNY began the conversation by remarking that it did not seem to her that much of an argument for the truth of the Bible could be drawn from this source.

“Why not?” asked her mother.

“O, because, mother, if the Bible had been invented by men, you know they would have had sense enough to make the different parts hang together.”

“Sense enough!” echoed her mother. “It takes more sense than you are aware of, I suspect. If you had lived a few years longer, you would have known better. Why, my dear child, it is the most difficult thing in the world, for *one man*, writing a *single history*, to keep from contradicting

himself. But the Bible was the work of many different authors, living in different countries and successive ages — ”

“ But, mother, — I beg pardon for interrupting you, — but could not the later writers have taken care to make their writings consistent with the first, and so on ? ”

“ Truly, my dear Fanny, you demand more miracles than are recorded in the Bible itself. In the first place, it *could* not have been done, had it been attempted. But, in the second place, what is to put it into the heads of so many men, in successive ages, to keep up such an imposture ? Even if a man could have been found to *originate* it, why should another man, who lived a century after, attempt to carry it on ? You must suppose a Moses to write a fabulous account of the creation, the deluge, the call of Abraham, and the origin and wanderings of the Jews. Another man, who lives later, takes up the scheme, continues the history of the Jews in a minute and circumstantial manner, and gives further predictions of a

great Prophet and Deliverer to come, who has been already prophesied of by his predecessor. Others succeed him, and take up the same purpose ; historians, poets and prophets, follow each other, writing with the greatest apparent candor and truth, and in the most sublime and exalted strains : and here, too, the same wonderful harmony subsists ; history, prophecy, types and institutions, all pointing the same way. The predictions of the future Redeemer constantly become more and more clear and minute ; his birth, manner of life, character, sufferings and death, are portrayed most circumstantially. Thus closes the canon of the Old Testament. After an interval of several hundred years, a new set of impostors arise, who pretend that this great Deliverer has actually come ; who give us four evidently independent and yet harmonious histories of his life and death, containing a wonderfully pure and exalted system of morality, and agreeing in all respects with the predictions of the first writers. Other

writings follow, containing the precepts of the new religion, in letters to those who had embraced it, and a narrative of the spread of Christianity, also completely harmonizing with the preceding parts of the vast scheme of imposture. Is all this credible ?”

“O, mother, I see how perfectly extravagant and foolish it is,” said Fanny, “and how foolish *I* was to say such a thing !”

“But you cannot see half the absurdity of the supposition, my dear, I am confident ; for, suppose the Bible contained only the *four gospels*, — yet, if these harmonized as perfectly as they do, with the same number of incidental and minor differences, showing that they are independent records, there would be sufficient evidence of their truth.”

“Why, mother !” said Fanny.

“But you say of their *truth*, mother ; I thought it was the *divinity* of the Bible we were inquiring about,” observed James.

“As they claim to be divine, if you prove their truth, you establish also their divinity.”

“Yes, mother, — very true.”

“But, Fanny, do you not know that whenever two historians undertake to describe an event which happened in their own time, and perhaps under their own observation, they often differ materially in their relation;—and if there are four narrators, the case is still worse.”

“But *why*, mother? I do not see why, at all.”

“Why does it happen that when you and James give me an account of the same circumstance, you so frequently differ in your statements, each correcting the other, and modifying his or her relation?”

“I don’t know, mother, I am sure; we seem to see the same thing with different eyes.”

“That is it, exactly: the impressions made on you are different; one thinks a thing to be larger or smaller, the time longer or shorter, the sound louder or fainter, than the other. So it is with all persons, and, of course, with historians. There is another source of difference, too, in the fact that each

man has his peculiar notions and prejudices; and these will unavoidably modify the views he takes of any public character or event. You, yourself, Fanny, have noticed, in the different histories of England we have read together, what various and opposite characters of Cromwell are given us; some making him almost an angel, and others almost a fiend."

"Yes, mother; I have often wondered at that."

"Take, now, the four gospels. They profess to be independent histories of the life, miracles, death and resurrection, of Jesus Christ. If they agreed in every particular,—that is, were precisely alike,—they would lose their claim to be regarded as independent histories, and it would be concluded, at once, that the later writers borrowed from the earlier. There are differences enough to disprove this objection, and no more. But, on the whole, the agreement is perfect."

"But I thought, mother," said James,

“that there was a good deal of difficulty in reconciling their accounts.”

“There was formerly supposed to be considerable difficulty, in some instances; but as men have advanced in the knowledge of oriental geography, manners and language, these difficulties have disappeared, one after the other; and there is no doubt that a further advance in knowledge will clear up the few that are yet left. In the mean time, a new kind of evidence for the truth of the gospels is growing up in the same way. It is the evidence which springs from obviously *undesigned* coincidences between the Evangelists, and is a very convincing species of evidence. Dr. Paley first made use of it in a work which he calls *Horæ Paulinæ*, and which is designed to exhibit the unintentional coincidences between the Acts and the Epistles.”

“But I do not see how it can be proved that they *are* unintentional,” said James.

“You will see it, if I give you some examples; because it is impossible, from the

nature of the case, to suppose any design. But as we have been conversing about the *gospels*, I prefer drawing my examples from them; and I select them from Blunt's 'Veracity of the Gospels,' which is constructed on the same plan with Paley's work on the Acts. In Mark 6: 31, we are told that Jesus said to his disciples, 'Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and *rest a while*; for, there were many,' adds the Evangelist, '*coming and going*, and they had no leisure, so much as to eat.' *Why* there was all this coming and going, we do not learn from Mark. He goes on to describe the miracle of feeding the five thousand in the desert. Turn now to John 6: 5—14, and you find his account of the same miracle. He says nothing about the '*coming and going*,' or about Jesus and his disciples going apart to *rest a while*; but he casually informs us that 'the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.' This, then, was the reason of the crowd, and the reason why, by going apart for a *while*, they might

escape it. Here is a *coincidence*, and evidently an undesigned one; is it not?"

"Yes, mother, certainly; there is no possibility of design there."

"Another occurs in the same passage. John informs us that Jesus asked *Philip*, 'Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?' Why should he have asked *Philip*, particularly? If we had the gospel of John alone, we should not know. But Luke, in his account of the same miracle, says that it was performed near Bethsaida (Luke 9: 10), and in the *first* chapter of John, we learn that 'Philip was of Bethsaida.' Does this look like imposture?"

"Not in the least, I am sure, mother. I wish I could find out some of these coincidences myself."

"If you study carefully enough, you may; there are undoubtedly more left to be discovered. My next example is found in Matt. 26: 67. 'They smote him with the palms of their hands, saying, *Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who is he that smote thee?*'

Now, if we had Matthew's gospel alone, we might ask, what occasion could there be for *prophesying*, when Christ had the offender before his eyes? But when we read, in *Luke 22: 64*, that the men who smote Jesus *blindfolded* him, we understand the matter at once. Once more; in *Matt. 14: 1*, it is said that Herod heard of the fame of Jesus, and said *unto his servants*, 'This is John the Baptist, &c. Why he should have talked to his servants about Christ, we do not know, till we read, in the eighth chapter of Luke, that among the women who accompanied Christ was '*Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward.*' And in *Acts 13: 1*, among the 'prophets and teachers, mention is made of '*Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch.*'"

"How very curious these are!" said Fanny; "and how strange that I never noticed any of them! I must read the Bible more carefully. But I hope you have more of them for us, mother."

"There are many more in the book, but

I can give you only one other at present. In Matt. 9: 9, after an account of Christ's calling Matthew, it is added, 'As Jesus sat at meat in *the* house,' behold many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him, and his disciples. It appears rather singular to talk of Jesus sitting down in *the* house, without telling us whose house it was; but Luke, in his account of the matter, says that it was in *Matthew's* house; and, therefore, it was perfectly natural for Matthew to use that form of expression, *the* house, as if everybody must know as well as he did what house was meant. Another circumstance recorded is, that many *publicans* came and sat down with them at table; a fact easily explained, when we remember that Matthew himself was a publican."

"How much more interesting this part of our subject has been than I expected!" said Fanny.

"I have no doubt," said her mother, "that from this source alone evidence might be drawn sufficiently strong to establish the

truth and genuineness of the different books of Scripture. But it would require a volume to bring out this evidence, and the subject can be but glanced at in a single conversation. Probably, any person who should set himself to examine and compare Scripture with Scripture, would be astonished to find what an amount of reference there is, in each book, to all or some of the books, so that they are interwoven together, and make one whole. The laws given to the Jews are continually referred to in the Psalms, the historical and prophetical books, and the New Testament. The types of the Old Testament are constantly brought up in the New. The agreement of prophecy with subsequent events forms a separate branch of our argument, and will be considered by itself. But that such a multitude of harmonies and coincidences should be found to exist, without a single discrepancy, is absolute proof that the Bible is true. And it has been justly remarked, that this harmony and self-consistency is the only evidence we

have of the truth of *any* ancient history. For if a man chose to call in question the whole *Roman* history, with all its evidences from books, inscriptions, coins, &c., asserting them to be all forged, one could only urge, in reply, the extreme improbability that such an attempt would be made, and the moral certainty that it could not be made without innumerable blunders and inconsistencies; so that if we had much less evidence than we have in support of the Roman history, we should still accept it as true. But we have had a long conversation. Our next subject will be, the *majesty* and *sublimity* of the Scriptures; and you may find passages which you regard as strikingly distinguished by these characteristics."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BIBLE BEARS A STAMP OF DIGNITY AND MAJESTY,
UNLIKE WHAT IS FOUND IN ANY HUMAN PRODUCTION.

“MOTHER,” said Fanny, as she seated herself, Bible in hand, on the next Sabbath evening, “James and I have found a great many passages which appeared to us very sublime,—so many that I am afraid we shall not have time to read them. Many of them are in the book of Job.”

“Yes, perhaps there is no book in the Bible that is more characterized by sublimity,” said her mother. “However, before we read, let us talk a little. We have proceeded altogether on the plan of inquiring what marks or characteristics might be expected in a revelation from God, and then inquiring whether these marks are to be found in the Bible. So far as our investigations have proceeded, the Bible stands the

test perfectly. Let us now see whether it possesses that *dignity* and *majesty* which might be expected in a Divine revelation. For if a book, professing to be such a revelation, should give us low and imperfect *representations of the Supreme Being*,—if it presented mean and unworthy views of *man's relations and destiny*, and degraded conceptions of the *rewards promised to virtue*,—and if the style were poor, faulty and unsuited to great themes, — these defects would exclude it from all claims to be regarded as Divine ; would they not ? ”

“ Yes, mother, of course.”

“ Are any of these suppositions true, with regard to it ? ”

“ No, mother, certainly not, it seems to me,” said Fanny ; “ but I do not know how to express what I think about it.”

“ Neither do I,” said James.

“ Then I will read to you one or two passages, which will, perhaps, express for you what you wish to say. The first is one often quoted from Sir William Jones. He

says that the 'Scriptures contain, independent of their Divine origin, more true sublimity, more exquisite beauty, more morality, more important history, and finer strains of poetry and eloquence, than could be collected, within the same compass, from all other books that were ever composed, in any other age or in any other idiom.' The celebrated Burke says, in speaking of the power of the Deity, that 'the Scripture alone can supply ideas answerable to the majesty of the subject. In the Scripture, wherever God is represented as appearing or speaking, everything terrible in nature is called up to heighten the awe and solemnity of the Divine presence. The Psalms and the prophetical books are crowded with instances of this kind.' And now, if any of the passages you have found contain representations of the Divine majesty, you may read them."

After some rustling and turning of leaves, Fanny read a part of the eighteenth Psalm:

“In my distress I called upon the Lord,
And cried unto my God :
He heard my voice out of his temple,
And my cry came before him, into his ears.
Then the earth shook and trembled ;
The foundations also of the hills moved,
And were shaken, because he was wroth.
There went up a smoke out of his nostrils,
And fire out of his mouth devoured :
Coals were kindled by it.
He bowed the heavens also, and came down :
And darkness was under his feet.
And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly ;
Yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.
He made darkness his secret place ;
His pavilion round about him were dark waters
And thick clouds of the skies.
At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds
passed ;
Hail-stones and coals of fire.
The Lord also thundered in the heavens,
And the Highest gave his voice ;
Hail-stones and coals of fire.
Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them ;
And he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them ;
Then the channels of waters were seen,
And the foundations of the world were discovered
At thy rebuke, O Lord,
At the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.”

Fanny read this as if she felt its grandeur. James next read several passages from the book of Job, ending with the twenty-sixth chapter ; though he said he had many more to read, if his mother had time to hear them.

She observed that one of the verses he had read contained, perhaps, as sublime a figure as was to be found in the Bible.

“ The pillars of heaven tremble,
And are astonished at his reproof.”

“ There is, however,” continued she, “ an equally striking and grand example of personification in the third chapter of Habakkuk. I have Herder’s translation of it here, and will read it, with some slight alterations :

‘ When God came from Teman,
The Holy One from Mount Paran,
His glory covered the heavens,
The earth was full of his praise.
His brightness was like the sun;
Rays of light shot forth from his hand;
And these were but the veiling of his might.
Before him walked the pestilence,
And burning coals went forth at his feet.

He stood ; the earth was moved :
He looked ; and the nations were scattered abroad.
The everlasting mountains were broken in pieces,
The perpetual hills did bow,
When he marched forth of old.
I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction:
The curtains of Midian trembled.
Was Jehovah angry at the rivers ?
Was the blast of thy breath at the waves ?
Was thy wrath against the sea ?
For thou didst ride upon thy horses
And chariots of victory.
Thou drewest thy bow,
Multiplying seven-fold thine arrows,
And the streams cleft asunder the land.
The mountains saw thee, and trembled ;
The overflowing waters fled away ;
The deep uttered his voice,
And lifted up his hands on high.
The sun and moon stood still in their places,
At the dazzling light of thine arrows flying,
At the brightness of thy glittering spear.' ”

The children liked this very much, and begged that their mother would read them more of Herder's translations. She accordingly read the two following, from Isaiah and Daniel :

“The year in which the king Uzziah died,
I saw Jehovah sitting on a high, uplifted throne ;
His train of glory filled the temple,
And round the throne his servants stood.
Six wings had each of these ;
With twain they covered their face,
With twain they covered their feet,
And with twain they did fly.
And one cried to another, and said,
‘ Holy, holy, holy,
Jehovah, God of hosts,
The earth is full of thy majesty ! ’
The foundations of the pillars moved
At the voice of him that cried,
And the temple was filled with smoke.”

ISAIAH 6 : 1—4.

“ This I saw until the thrones were raised,
And the Ancient of Days enthroned :
His garment was white as snow,
The hair of his head like pure wool ;
His throne was like the fiery flame,
Its wheels like burning fire.
A fiery stream issued forth,
And went before his face ;
A thousand thousand ministered to him,
Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him.
The judgment was set,
And the books were opened.”

Fanny would willingly have spent the whole evening in listening to passages like this; and she assured her mother that they had not read "half a quarter" of those which she had found.

"I do not doubt it, my dear," replied her mother; "the Bible, in fact, is full of such sublime representations: but we must not lose sight of our argument, and of the purpose for which we are citing these passages. The very fact we are to notice is, that while the Scriptures are *full* of God, full of descriptions and representations of him, there is not, through the whole of them, *one* unworthy or imperfect delineation. Everywhere the same grandeur, majesty and sublimity; the same unspotted holiness and unswerving justice; the same truth, and wisdom, and love. And, to give this fact its full weight, we must contrast the Jehovah of the Bible with the false deities of other nations,—the cruel, impure and contemptible gods of the heathen. Then let us ask ourselves whether any man,

or set of men, was capable of *inventing* such a God as is revealed in the Scriptures."

"No, indeed!" replied Fanny, with fervor.

"Let us next consider the views which the Bible gives us of *man's relations and destiny*. In this respect, there is a wide difference, or rather a perfect contrast, between the Christian religion and other previously existing religions. According to them, man is a creature of time, born to flutter away a brief existence, like the butterfly, and then pass out of existence. The Bible represents him as an heir of immortality, born to live through endless ages, related to God himself, and destined to live as long as God shall live. The heathen systems knew of no worthy *end* for which he came into being, and considered him as the product of chance or fate, — the same blind fate which governed his actions and appointed his death. The Christian religion teaches us that man is a moral and accountable being,

the creature of God, and the object of his unceasing care; amenable to his law, created for his glory, and destined to give an account of every work and every secret thought. How ennobling is one view, — how degrading the other ! ”

“ Yet, mother,” said James, “ I thought you said, once before, that the Christian religion differed from others in *humbling* man, instead of exalting him; and that this proved it not to be a human invention.”

“ So I did, my dear; and this is another point of contrast, not less striking, and not less favorable to Christianity. She humbles where they exalt, and exalts where they degrade. She gives man just views of his own weakness, sinfulness and folly, leading to self-distrust and humility; while she encourages him to effort, by pointing to what he may become through the grace of God, and to his high destiny if he is faithful. Other systems puff him up with false notions of his own wisdom and goodness, leading to self-confidence and vain glory;

while they hold out nothing in the future to inspire him with the love of true greatness."

"What a strange mixture there seems to be in men — I mean in man — of greatness and littleness!" said James.

"Very true, James; if you will hand me Young's 'Night Thoughts,' from the bookcase, I will read to you a passage which expresses the same thought. Here it is. Speaking of man, he calls him —

'A beam ethereal, sullied and absorbed!
Though sullied and dishonored, still Divine!
Dim miniature of greatness absolute!
An heir of glory! a frail child of dust!
Helpless immortal! insect infinite!
A worm! a god! — I tremble at myself,
And in myself am lost.'"

"I think I have read that passage somewhere before," said Fanny; "but I did not understand it so well as I do now; it is very striking."

"And do you remember no passages of

Scripture which contain similar representations?" asked her mother.

As Fanny could think of none, her mother read the eighth Psalm.

" ' When I look at the heavens, the work of thy hands,
The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained, —
What is man, that thou art mindful of him ?
The son of man, that thou visitest him ?
Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels ;
Thou hast crowned him with honor and majesty ;
Hast made him lord of all thy works ;
Hast placed all things under his feet.
His are the herds of sheep and oxen ;
The beasts of the field are his also ;
The fowls of heaven and the fish of the sea,
And whatever passeth the paths of the seas.'

" In contrast with which, we may take such passages as the following :

' Behold, the nations are as a drop in the bucket,
And are counted as the small dust of the balance.
All nations before him are as nothing,
And they are counted to him less than nothing, and
vanity.'

' How, then, can man be justified with God ?
Or how can he be clean, that is born of a woman ?

Behold even the moon, and it shineth not ;
Yea, the stars are not pure in his sight ;
How much less man, that is a worm !
And the son of man, which is a worm !

“But we have exceeded our usual time of conversation, and can only allude to the remaining point,—the superior nature of the *rewards promised* in the Scriptures to those offered by other religions. I believe you know, however, that the latter are entirely sensual and gross in their nature, while the heaven of the Bible is entirely spiritual, consisting in the enjoyment of God. A little reflection will show you how strong is the proof derived from this source for the Divine origin of the Scriptures.”

“But one of the places I have marked is a description of heaven, mother ; just let me read that, will you ?” said Fanny.

“Very well, my dear ; read it.”

Fanny read part of the twenty-first chapter of Revelation, beginning at the tenth verse, and ending with the fifth verse of chapter twenty-second.

“We have now reached another division of our subject,” said her mother, — “*the adaptation of the Gospel to man’s wants*. And the first want we shall notice is, a clearer *knowledge*, — 1, of God, — 2, of Duty, — and 3, of himself and his destiny.”

9*

CHAPTER IX. .

THE BIBLE IS ADAPTED TO MAN'S WANTS, INASMUCH AS IT FURNISHES HIM WITH KNOWLEDGE CLEARER THAN THAT DERIVED FROM NATURE.

“MOTHER,” said James, “may I ask one question, before we begin?”

“Certainly, my dear, you may ask one, or more; but I do not very well see how you will do it *before we begin*.”

“I meant before we begin on our regular subject. I want to know how it is that all nations seem to have some sort of a god or other;—if they do not know about the true God, I should think they would not have any deity.”

“It is owing, I suppose, to the constitution of man. There seems to be implanted in him a *desire to worship*: he must have something to look up to, something to reverence; and if he has no knowledge of the true God, he will invent gods for himself.”

“But is it true, mother,” asked Fanny, “that *all* nations do worship some god?”

“It is true, I believe, my dear. Travelers bring us an account of no nation which has not some object of worship. And this fact, taken in connection with another, viz., that men always *become like the objects of their worship*, shows the extreme importance and desirableness to men of a knowledge of the true God. The effect of idol-worship is always debasing and polluting in the highest degree; and the very first step could not have been taken towards the redemption of man from the power of sin, without communicating to him a knowledge of Jehovah.”

“But you say that men become like the object of their worship;—most of the people in this country do not seem to be like God at all, and yet they worship him.”

“They acknowledge him in *words*, and worship him with the *body*; but how few worship him in *reality*, ‘in spirit and in truth!’ Among those who do *thus* wor-

ship God, there is a constant and growing likeness to him. This is one of the means by which sanctification is effected; and the Bible assures us that when we see our Saviour face to face, we shall be like him, *for* we shall see him as he is. But even the *nominal* worship of Jehovah has a far better effect on the character than the worship of polluted deities, and probably there is no country where the true God is known in which the state of morals is anything like as low as it is in those parts of the world where idol-worship exists. Indeed, it is hard for us even to form a conception of such a corrupt state of society as existed among the Greeks, for instance, according to the accounts of historians. Your question, James, has led us directly to the subject of our lesson to-day. The first want of man, in his natural state, evidently is, clearer *knowledge*. Without a revelation of some kind, he could not discover what he needs to know either of God, of the future, or of duty. We have already seen that this is

one of the considerations which renders a revelation *probable*, at all; and if it was probable at all, there was a probability that it would teach those things which man needed to be taught. Indeed, the very idea of a *revelation* is the communication of *knowledge*,—for what is a revelation which reveals nothing?”

“What did the men do, then, who lived before the Bible was written?” asked Fanny. “Adam, for instance,—he must have needed a knowledge of God, even though he was innocent. And he must have known about God, in some way, of course;—how do you suppose he did, mother?”

“It does not follow that a *written* revelation would have been needed, if man had not fallen,” said her mother. “God undoubtedly made himself known to Adam directly, and held frequent intercourse with him, before his fall. I believe I have remarked before, that an innocent creature would have needed the knowledge of his Creator and communion with him, in order

to the perfection and happiness of his nature. Indeed, it is difficult to see how there could be any right or wrong, and consequently how there could be any true dignity or happiness, for a rational *creature*, without the knowledge of God. He would resemble the brutes in his enjoyments, and would be distinguished from them only by the sense of an unappeasable want. But after man fell, the revelation of God to him became necessary on other grounds. Do you see what they are?"

"Why, I suppose," said James, "that if God meant to restore and pardon men, he could not do it without giving them a knowledge of himself."

"No, certainly not, and that for several reasons. If he designed to restore man to holiness, he must present him with a holy object to worship. He must give the knowledge of himself as a lawgiver, before he could impose a law. And he must give the knowledge of himself and of his law, before

he could send a Redeemer in the person of his Son."

"Yes, mother, — I see that."

"Now, the Bible contains an account — an exceedingly interesting account — of the means which God adopted to keep alive among men the knowledge of himself, preparatory to sending his Son. He first selected a nation to be the peculiar depository of this knowledge. He called Abraham out from among his idolatrous companions, revealed himself to him, established him in a new country, and entered into solemn covenant with him. His descendants, however, enslaved by the Egyptians, lost almost wholly the light thus communicated to them; and, if they did not forget the God of their fathers, yet they associated other gods with him, and ascribed to him unworthy attributes."

"Then it seems as if all that God had done by calling Abraham was lost again, while the Israelites were in Egypt. Was it not very strange that God should leave

them so long in a country where idols were worshipped, if he wanted them to worship him only ?”

“On the contrary, the bondage in Egypt was a part, and a most important part, of the *education* of the Israelites. For you must remember that they were ignorant and foolish ; they were to be taught and educated like children. Now, it would not have been enough for God simply to *reveal* himself to such a people ; they were not prepared to receive so sublime a doctrine, nor to relish such a deity. They would have clung to their idolatry, unless God had adopted some means to secure their gratitude and affection.”

“But still, mother, I cannot see how their being kept in Egypt so long, among idolaters, had any tendency to *cure* them of idolatry.”

“I can make it plain to you, I think, my dear. There are some excellent thoughts, on this point, in a very interesting book, called ‘The Philosophy of the Plan of Sal-

vation.' It was necessary, in the first place, in order to the accomplishment of God's designs for the Jews, that the bond of national attachment should be very strong, so that the nation should feel and act together like one man. This end was brought about so fully in regard to them, that they have forever remained a separate people. Amidst all their dispersions and banishments, and whilst other nations have been scattered to the four winds, they have continued *one* — bound together by a tie which nothing can sever. Now, one of the most important means of bringing about this result was the bondage in Egypt. It is well known that people who suffer together, from the same cause, become strongly attached to each other. Nothing could have so bound the Israelites together as their common sufferings under the Egyptian yoke. Do you see this?"

"Yes, mother, but —"

"But what?"

"Why, it seems as if that was a slight

advantage, to counterbalance the danger they were in of learning idolatry."

"Let us see whether the danger was as great as you suppose. If the Egyptians had been their *friends* and *allies*, their example might, indeed, have been detrimental to the Israelites. But as they were *oppressors* and *task-masters*, their idolatry, as well as everything else connected with them, would be rendered odious to the Jews."

"O yes, — I see that now !"

"Besides, there were other and more important ends to be answered. God wished to reveal himself to the Israelites in such a way as to gain their affections. If he failed to secure their *love*, the revelation of himself to them would be useless; they would not retain the knowledge of a deity to whom they were not bound by any ties of gratitude. Now, what more effectual mode of securing the love and gratitude of a nation could God have chosen, than that he adopted with the Israelites? After they had been groaning for years under a cruel servitude, when

there seemed no hope of deliverance, and when they were ready, in their despair, to pray for death, — Moses is sent to tell them that God, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, had seen their affliction, and was about to deliver them. Do you not see how every eye and every heart in the nation would be directed towards this promised deliverer ? ”

“ O yes ! — I wonder I never thought of it in that way before.”

“ Still further : their deliverance is not effected at once ; — Pharaoh resists the command of Jehovah, — there is a period of doubt and suspense, — the people look anxiously to see which party will be victorious, the haughty king and his idol gods, on the one hand, or the God of their fathers, on the other. A series of remarkable miracles is wrought before them, adapted to exhibit the power and greatness of Jehovah, and his superiority to the Egyptian deities, in a clear light. God’s judgments upon Pharaoh grow more and more severe, till he is forced not

only to *consent* to the departure of the Israelites, but to *entreat* it; and finally, when his mad presumption leads him to pursue them even to the borders of the Red Sea, the sea opens before the flying people of God, at the command of Moses, only to return and swallow up the host of Pharaoh before their eyes. Now, consider how admirably adapted every part of this chain of events was, to inspire the Israelites with reverence, admiration, gratitude and love,—to convince them that Jehovah alone was God, and to lead them, as we are told it did lead them, ‘to fear the Lord, and believe the Lord and his servant, Moses.’ ”

“But I am astonished at myself, mother,” said James, “that I never thought before about what was God’s design in sending the Israelites into Egypt, or in all those miracles which Moses wrought; it seems now as clear as daylight.”

“Yes,” said Fanny; “and it seems stranger than ever, how the Israelites could

have been so foolish and stupid as to go back into idolatry, after they had seen such things."

"And a great many more things, just as wonderful," added James; "for, you know, all through Judges and Kings, after God had performed a thousand more miracles, it says over and over again, that 'the children of Israel forsook the Lord and served Baal.'"

"Sure enough!" said Fanny;—"how strange!"

"Perhaps, in the sight of God, it is far less strange than some part of *your* conduct," said her mother. "If you compare your history with that of the Jews, I think you will find that you have received more wonderful and convincing displays of the Divine perfections; and yet, you are continually setting up idols in your heart."

As Fanny made no reply, her mother resumed: "I should like to talk longer with you on this subject, and show you the means which God took, in his dealings

with the Jews, to reveal to them his various attributes. For instance, how he communicated to them an idea of his *holiness*, by requiring that animals offered in sacrifice should be from a particular class, that they should be without *spot* or *blemish*; that all the vessels of the sanctuary, and everything used in the worship of God, should be *purified*; that no person afflicted with a loathsome disease should enter the place of worship; that a certain class or tribe should be sanctified to offer sacrifices for the rest of the people, and that out of these the high priest alone might enter the holy of holies, and he but once a year, — barefooted; — the effect of these, and other ordinances, evidently was to communicate the idea so often repeated, — ‘I, the Lord your God, am holy.’ But I will leave you to discover for yourselves how God’s justice and other perfections were taught to the Jews. Not to lose sight of our argument, we have seen that man’s first want was clearer *knowledge*. That the Bible meets

this want, so far as the character of *God* is concerned, we have also seen. Next time we will examine the question, what new light it throws on the subject of *Duty*."

CHAPTER X.

THE SYSTEM OF DUTIES ENJOINED IN THE BIBLE IS FAR PURER THAN THAT TAUGHT BY ANY OTHER RELIGION, AND IS, IN FACT, ABSOLUTELY PERFECT.

“WE are now examining how far the Bible is adapted to the wants of man. And the first of these wants is clearer knowledge of God. This the Bible furnishes. The second is a clearer knowledge of *Duty*, or of right and wrong. A revelation from God might be expected to unfold a purer system of morality than existed elsewhere. What have you to say on this point?”

“I remember what you told us before, mother,” said Fanny, “about the way in which the Greeks treated their slaves, and sometimes their children; and I know they stole, too, and taught their children to steal and lie.”

“I have a general notion,” said James, “that the morality of heathen nations has

always been much lower than that of Christian nations; but I do not remember any particular examples of it, except those Fanny named."

"Our question," said his mother, "includes more than *morality*, which is commonly limited to the duties we owe each other; it relates to the whole subject of *duty*. Our duties may be divided into three classes: those which we owe to *God*, those which we owe to our *fellow-men*, and those which we owe to *ourselves*. These duties grow out of our relations; and, as all other relations are founded upon and grow out of our relation to *God*, therefore, our duties to each other and to ourselves grow out of our relation to God. In other words, the only true foundation of *morality* is *religion*. And if this fundamental point of our relation to God, and the duties consequent upon it, is overlooked or misunderstood, there can be no perfect system of morals."

"Then I do not see but the morality of heathen nations is condemned at once," said

James, "for you have shown us before that they were wholly defective in their views of God."

"Very true," said his mother. "This supreme love to God, which lies at the foundation of all duty, is taught *nowhere* but in the Bible. The Greeks and Romans never had the most remote idea of such a thing. That man was to live for God, that his end was to glorify God, and that he was the property of God, they never suspected. Every man was to live for himself, or, at least, for his country. Thus they not only failed entirely in the duties comprised under the first table of the law, but this defect spoiled every other duty, inasmuch as our duties to man grow ultimately out of our common relation to God."

"But, mother, that is just what I do not understand," said Fanny, "and I have been all in a puzzle about it, these last few minutes. I do not understand how my duties to you, for instance, grow out of my relation to

God; or why I could not be a good daughter, even if I had never heard of God."

"Let us consider," said her mother. "You owe me, in the first place, certain duties in common with all other beings, and independent of my particular relation to you. One of the duties which every man owes to every other man is, not to interfere with his *rights*, not to injure him in life, property, or reputation. But whence came these rights? How came any man to have any rights, at all? It is plain that he must have derived them from God. God created him, and he also created you: you are, therefore, his *fellow-creature*; you both sustain the same relation to God, and both receive the same rights from him; and one of these is the right not to be injured. Is this plain?"

"Yes, mother, very plain."

"Now, in your case and mine, you owe me certain duties which you do not owe to your fellow-creatures in general; but these duties grow out of your relation to me as a

daughter, and this relation God has constituted. If we had both come into the world *by chance*, you would have owed me no duties, so far as I can perceive."

The children were both silent, and reflected. At last Fanny spoke. "You said we owed duties to ourselves, mother; I do not see what they are, or how there can be any."

"Why, Fanny!" said James, "have you forgotten that question in the Catechism, — what is required in the sixth commandment, — and the answer to it?"

"O, to be sure; I wonder I did not think of that."

"In regard to this class of duties," said their mother, "the morality of the Greeks and Romans was entirely defective. They held it to be not only lawful, but magnanimous, for a man to take his own life, when he had nothing more to hope for in this world."

"Yes, Cato killed himself, you know," said James.

“And Seneca says, ‘If thy mind be melancholy and in misery, thou mayest put a period to this wretched condition. Wherever thou lookest, there is an end to it. See that precipice; there thou mayest have liberty. Seest thou that sea, that river, that well? Liberty is at the bottom of it.’”

“Seneca? I thought he was a very wise man,” said Fanny.

“He was so accounted,” replied her mother, “and was so, in some things; and yet, you see he was ignorant of so very obvious a truth as that he who gave life alone has a right to recall it.”

“Then, mother, was there no duty at all which the ancients knew and practised?”

“Yes; there were some points, especially the duties of a citizen to the state, which they seemed to understand very well. But right and wrong were so blended together in their institutions, that it was difficult to separate them. Besides, in answering such a question, it is necessary to distinguish between the philosophers and the mass of the

people. The philosophers, who were few in number, and who devoted their lives to study, did attain to some sublime speculations respecting virtue and duty: but these were wholly unknown to the common people; and if they had been known by them, could not have been understood, nor, if they had been understood, would they have been practised. There was nothing to give them the force of a law, — nothing to make them binding. They were mere speculations; delighted in by the philosophers themselves, as cultivating intellectual acuteness, but regarded even by them as having little to do with conduct.”

“I have read, somewhere, that the Bible is the only book which teaches the forgiveness of injuries; is that true, mother?” said James.

“Not absolutely, perhaps, yet true in the general spirit of the assertion. The ancient stoics inculcated a spirit of forgiveness; but it was rather an *indifference* to injuries than a *pardon* of them. It was a part of their

system to make men indifferent both to pleasure and pain, to benefits and injuries. Their doctrine of forgiveness, therefore, had little in common with the Christian precept, 'Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you.' It has been sometimes asserted that there is no duty enjoined in the Bible which is not taught somewhere in the works of the ancient sages. And, perhaps, in a very limited sense, this may be true; that is, there are precepts scattered here and there, through their works, which have a resemblance to the precepts of the Bible. But, in the *first* place, they are scattered at random, and form no complete system,—one man having discovered one truth, while he was blind to others. In the *second* place, they were wholly *inoperative*, having no authority, and exerting no influence in practice. In short, the true and proper test of what any system *can* accomplish is what it *does* accomplish; and, tried by this test, all the systems of ancient philosophy are worth-

less. They accomplished *nothing* for men; they produced no reformation, they originated no moral renovation. After they had all been tried, there was ample evidence that something more was needed."

"I should think that infidels could not help seeing the superiority of the Bible, in this respect," said James.

"They do see it," replied his mother, "and some of them have acknowledged it. Diderot, one of the most famous French infidels, was one day found by an acquaintance explaining a chapter from one of the gospels to his little daughter. In reply to the expressions of surprise uttered by his visiter, Diderot said, 'I understand you; but, in truth, what better lesson could I give her?' Lord Bolingbroke, a celebrated English deist, says that, 'supposing Christianity to have been an invention, it is the most amiable invention ever imposed on men, and the most for their good;' and that 'the Gospel is one continued lesson of the strictest morality, of justice, of benevolence, and of universal char-

ity.' Gibbon, another renowned infidel, allows that 'the Christian religion contains a pure, benevolent, and universal system of ethics, adapted to every duty and every condition in life.' "

"How strange," said James, "that they should have seen all this, and yet continued infidels!"

"Yes; the fault was in their hearts, not their heads. I will conclude our conversation with reading a passage from the works of Bonnet, a learned and pious French author, who lived in the last century. 'I shall not inquire,' says he, 'whence these plain, artless fishermen have been able to dictate to mankind a system of morals so far superior to what reason had till then conceived, — a system in which all the duties of man are comprised; which refers them all to their true source; which forms into one family all the different societies dispersed over the earth; which binds closely together all the members of that family; which connects it with the great family of celestial

intelligences; and which proclaims *Him* the father of those families whose goodness extends from the sparrow to the cherubim. I shall readily acknowledge that so sublime a philosophy did not take its rise in the turbid waters of the Jordan, and that so bright a light did not break out from the thick darkness of the synagogue.'

"There is still another point on which man needs a light clearer than that furnished by nature, and that is, *his own destiny*. This will be our next subject."

CHAPTER XI.

THE BIBLE FURNISHES THE KNOWLEDGE WHICH MAN NEEDS
OF THE FUTURE, AND OF HIS OWN RELATIONS TO IT.

“MOTHER,” said James, as they took their seats on the succeeding Sabbath evening, “Fanny and I have been wondering why it was necessary that men should know anything about the future, or about the consequences of doing right or wrong. As long as God had plainly made known to them his will, why could they not have gone on to do it, without understanding anything further?”

“They *could* have done so, perhaps, but most certainly they *would* not; and they would have wanted one powerful class of motives for so doing. If they had remained innocent, so that the whole race would naturally and spontaneously have obeyed the law of God, as Adam did before his fall, it would

not have been *necessary*, strictly speaking, that they should know anything about the future. But the law is not made for the righteous, but for sinners, — those who need *inducements* to do right, as well as the *knowledge* of right, — who must be *driven* to obedience by *penalties*, since they are not constrained to it by love. If God issued a law, determining at the same time to inflict a certain penalty on the transgressors of it, it would seem hardly consistent with benevolence, or with truth, to withhold from his creatures all knowledge of that penalty.”

“No, mother, I see it would not.”

“Moreover, some duties could hardly be performed at all, without reference to a future state of being. If man was left to suppose that this life was all, how could he possibly choose God for his portion, and repose an unshaken confidence in him, as he now may do, in the prospect of an eternal existence? This life is designed to *prepare* men for another; and one part of the

preparation for heaven consists in anticipating it and dwelling upon it by faith."

"Yes, and how very *unhappy* we should be," said Fanny, "if we did not know what was to become of us after this life!—if we saw people dying every day, and did not know whether that was the end of them, or whether they were alive in another world!"

"Yes, the natural result of such a state of things would be to produce the resolution, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. There is, therefore, no point on which knowledge was more desirable to man than on the future; and the doctrine of the soul's immortality, which was first taught explicitly by Jesus Christ, forms one of the glories of his system."

"You told us, mother," observed James, "that some of the ancients—Plato and Cicero especially, I remember—*wished* to believe in the immortality of the soul, and tried to find arguments to prove it. I wonder what proofs they *did* find."

"Some of them were flimsy enough.

Cicero's first argument is, that the gods were once men, and from their having become immortal, we may hope for the like good fortune. But another argument of his has more force: he says, we may hope that the soul is immortal, because there is a universal desire in the human soul for immortality — a reaching towards it, and anticipation of it."

"Do you think that is true, mother? I mean, do you think that men generally — those who have no hope of heaven — would be sorry to find that death would be the end of them?"

"I think they would, because men generally have a sort of hope that they shall finally get to heaven; and nothing but absolute despair of this would probably make them prefer the idea of annihilation."

"Then I must be different from other people, for there does not seem to me to be anything terrible in the idea of annihilation," said James.

His mother seemed to hesitate, but finally made no reply to this observation.

“How curious it would be,” said Fanny, “if we could look into the minds of some of those old philosophers, and see exactly what they thought and how they felt !”

“Here is a passage which I will read to you,” replied her mother, “which will show you how one of them thought and felt.

“‘Alas ! the tender herbs and flowering tribes,
Though crushed by winter’s unrelenting hand,
Revive and rise when vernal zephyrs call ;
But we, the brave, the mighty and the wise,
Bloom, flourish, fade and fall, and then succeeds
A long, long, silent, dark, oblivious sleep, —
A sleep which no propitious power dispels,
Nor changing seasons nor revolving years.’ ”

“What a mournful sound that has !” said Fanny.

“Yes,” replied her mother, “and not less so are the words which fell from the lips of the wise and good Socrates, just before his death. ‘I am going out of the world, and you are to continue in it; but which of us

hath the better part, is known only to the gods.' ”

“How I wish he *could* have known all that we know ! ” said Fanny.

“This state of doubt, or one of absolute despair, must have been our state,” said her mother, “unless God had made to us a revelation of the future, as he has done in the Bible. You perceive, then, that the Bible answers to the wants of man in this respect,—that it gives him a knowledge of the future. But do the revelations it makes concerning the future harmonize with the character of God himself? and do the rewards promised to right-doing meet the desires and capacities of the soul?—because this, too, we might expect, if the Bible is from God.”

As neither of the children replied, their mother continued :

“I should not have given you two questions at once. You know we are taught in the Scriptures, that eternal happiness will be the portion of the righteous, and eternal misery the portion of the wicked. Is this

in accordance with what we should expect from a holy and righteous God ? ”

“ Yes, mother, I should think so, — of course,” answered James.

“ And it is evidently only carrying out what he has begun, in the present life,” said his mother ; “ only that, as I remarked before, God does not fully manifest his displeasure against sin, or his approbation of goodness, in this world, because the present is a state of trial. Another thing we might expect is, that the rewards promised to obedience should be *suited to the wants and capacities of the soul*, and such as would secure its highest bliss. Is this so ? ”

“ Yes, mother, I suppose it is.”

“ I cannot expect you to speak with much readiness or assurance on this point,” observed his mother, “ because, alas ! neither of you know, by experience, anything of the nature of these rewards. But the man who has tasted the exalted bliss of communion with God, and of a beginning likeness to Him, knows that this is that for which his

soul was made, and the *only* portion it is capable of enjoying."

"But other people — I mean people who are not Christians — cannot know that," said James.

"Very well; but that is their own fault," replied his mother. "They might know it, by making trial of this source of happiness. And all men have one kind of evidence on the subject, — what may be called a negative evidence. They all know that the enjoyments they are able to find in this world are *not* able to make them happy. So that, if the Bible had promised, as the Koran of Mahomet does, only a continuation of the same kind of pleasures that are to be found in this world, men would have reason to know that it was not from God, as they would feel that such a portion could not satisfy them."

"Do you think, mother, that men are so dissatisfied with this life?" asked Fanny. "I mean, those men who have plenty of things to enjoy."

“I not only think it, my dear,—I know it. There is abundant evidence on this point. In the course of a revival of religion, when men are awakened by the spirit of God, and led to speak out candidly what they feel, they often confess that they have never known true happiness. And hundreds of others have made the same confession on their death-beds, when it was too late for them to make trial of any new source of happiness. I suppose it seems to you as if there was a great deal to be enjoyed in the world.”

“Yes, mother, it does seem so to me,” said Fanny.

“But, have you ever been perfectly happy? Would you be willing to live on forever, just the same sort of life you are living now, enjoying just as much as you do now, and no more?”

“No, mother, I do not think I should. But, then, I expect a great many new enjoyments, as I grow older.”

“You will have new enjoyments, un-

doubtedly, if your life is spared ; but you will have also new sorrows, and your enjoyments will be mingled with alloys and disappointments, just as they are now. Then, by the time you have reached middle age, you will have made trial of most kinds of enjoyments, so that nothing new will remain for you to try ; and you will then have the same feeling, only more strongly, which you just now expressed, that you would not be willing to live on so forever. And if you should be spared to a still greater age, this weariness and disgust of life will increase upon you, and you will have as firm a conviction, probably, as any of the rest of the world, that your soul was not made to be satisfied with earthly good."

"But it does not seem as if the people we meet every day felt so unhappy and dissatisfied as you say, mother," replied Fanny. "I am sure people seem very merry."

"Many of the people, most of the people, you see every day," answered her mother, "are Christians, and have higher sources of

happiness than this world can afford. And men of the world do not expose their feelings of dissatisfaction to others — least of all do they carry them in their faces so plainly that a little girl can read them.”

“Some of them do, though, I think,” said James; “I should not have made the same remark Fanny did, from my observation of men.”

“But it seems strange,” resumed Fanny, “that, if men feel so, they do not make trial of religion.”

“I will answer you in the words of a great poet,” said her mother. “Wordsworth says :

‘ ’Tis an easy thing
Earth to despise; but to converse with heaven —
That is not easy.’

It is one thing to be sick of the world, and another thing to have a heart fitted for the high and holy joys of the redeemed. A man who has passed thirty or forty or fifty years in the pursuit of sinful pleasures, and the

indulgence of sinful passions, cannot, at will, elevate himself from the dust, and begin to relish the pure and holy joy of communion with God. Most miserable is the state of a man wearied and sated with earth, and yet unfitted for heaven. But we have wandered a little from our subject. We have seen that the Bible supplies man's wants as far as a clearer knowledge of the future is concerned. Next Sabbath we will inquire whether it reveals any way in which he may obtain the pardon of sin."

CHAPTER XII.

THE BIBLE REVEALS TO MAN THE ONLY WAY IN WHICH
HE MAY SECURE THE PARDON OF SIN.

"It seems to me, mother," said James, "that we have come now to the strongest argument we have had, to prove that the Bible is from God; because men might have known or invented *something*, perhaps, about God, or about the future, but they never could have found out *anything* about being saved by Jesus Christ, if it had not been revealed in the Bible."

"You are right, my son. And if the Bible had met every other test, yet if it had failed to meet and provide for this *one great want* of man, it would have lacked an *essential* feature; it never could have sustained its claim to be a revelation from God."

"It seems strange," said Fanny, "that God should have waited so long before he

sent Christ ; only think — four thousand years ! and how many people died without knowing anything about him ! ”

“ It may seem strange to us, blind and ignorant creatures as we are, and indeed many of God’s dealings *must* seem so ; but we should never forget that he has infinitely wise reasons for all that he does. In this instance the Bible expressly assures us of the fact ; do you know the passage to which I allude ? ”

After a moment’s thought, James and Fanny replied in the negative.

“ You will find it in Gal. 4 : 4, — ‘ *When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son.* ’ And again in Romans, — ‘ For when we were yet without strength, *in due time* Christ died for the ungodly. ’ ”

“ How many times I have read and heard those verses, without thinking about them ! ” said Fanny.

“ Although God may have had many reasons which we cannot discover for delaying the coming of Christ so long, yet there is

one very important reason which we *can* see."

"What is that, mother?" asked James.

"It was, that the world might be prepared to receive him when he should come. Do you know in what this preparation consisted?"

Fanny at once said, no. James hesitated. "I cannot think, mother, — was the world growing any better?" he asked, doubtfully.

"On the contrary, it was growing worse; and if it had been growing better, that would have been no preparation for Christ's coming."

"Why, mother!" exclaimed Fanny; "I do not understand you at all."

"I should have said, perhaps, that it could not grow *radically* better, without a Saviour; and any improvement in *outward* things, merely, would only have puffed men up with pride, and made them feel that they did not need a Saviour. Now, God's de-

sign, in making them wait four thousand years, was to let them find out their need."

"O!" said Fanny, as if a new light had dawned upon her. "If Christ had come soon after the fall, it might have been said that there was no need of him; that science and philosophy were able to regenerate men; that they were capable of guiding and governing themselves, by the aid of reason; and that the fall had not left man wholly destitute of goodness, nor wholly dependent on God for salvation. It was, therefore, necessary that all human inventions and systems for saving men should be thoroughly tried, and found wanting, so that mankind might feel their need of a Divine Redeemer."

"I believe I always had a sort of notion," said James, "that God was waiting for the world to grow better."

"But it did *not* grow any better, you see," replied his mother. "Were the Pharisees in Christ's time, whom he compares to 'whited sepulchres, full of dead men's bones, and all

uncleanness,' and whom John calls a 'generation of vipers,' — were they any better than their fathers had been? And as to the heathen nations, we may find an account of what they were, in the first chapter of Romans."

"Well, mother," said James, "did it do any good for God to wait so long?—I mean, did people learn what he meant they should about their need of a Saviour?"

"If they did not, it was because they were incapable of learning from experience," replied his mother. "The philosophers tried all their systems, one after another, in vain, and were finally obliged to confess that their teachings, and the inducements they were able to hold out to the practice of virtue, were wholly insufficient to restrain the lawless appetites and passions of the multitude. They could not help seeing the wide-spread corruption of human nature; but they could not account for it, or devise a remedy. But there was another question, and that is the one we have to consider now,—not only

how sin could be prevented or checked, but how past sins could be forgiven. This question engaged the attention of some of the wisest of the Greek philosophers, and they could find no solution to it. Plato declared that it was *impossible* for a just God to pardon sin. Socrates, however, expressed a hope that God would one day send a man instructed by himself, who should reveal to the world that most interesting of all mysteries — how he will pardon sin.”

“How remarkable !” said James.

“What a pity he could not have known about Christ !” said Fanny. “But, after all, mother, Socrates and Plato were not *to blame* for not knowing anything about Christ ; — how could they possibly ?”

“Certainly, they were not to blame. That is the very thing we are saying ; that a revelation was *necessary*, and Christ’s coming in the flesh was necessary, because human reason could not, by any possibility, have devised or invented such a way of escape. Even if the wonderful and awful plan of

salvation by God himself becoming a sacrifice had occurred to Socrates or Plato, — though it never could have occurred to him, — yet even, I say, if it had, it would have done him no good, and would have amounted to nothing, so long as he did not know that God actually *had* determined to save men in that way.”

“Poor Socrates! what could he do, then?” asked Fanny.

“He could only live according to the light which he had; and this, there is some reason to believe, he did. And if he ‘feared God and worked righteousness,’ he was accepted of him.”

“How astonished he would have been, if he could have known all that we know!”

“Yes, the knowledge which the youngest Sabbath-school scholar has would have filled many of those old philosophers with wonder, and delight, and gratitude. Well might our Saviour say that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see the

things which we see, and have not seen them ! And well might he tell us that it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day of judgment, than for us, if we abuse such privileges ! ”

“ Mother,” said James, after a while, “ how do you suppose it happened that so many heathen nations have thought that God would be pleased with sacrifices ? ”

“ It would take a long time to answer that question fully,” replied his mother, “ and the answer would involve some points you cannot understand. I suppose that the notion spread, in part, from traditions of what was practised among the Jews. God himself instituted sacrifices among them, as types of Christ, the great sacrifice who was to be offered in due time ; and from them the custom spread into surrounding nations. Then the sense of sin, and of the desert of punishment, was found everywhere ; and as the minds of men, under the lashings of conscience, were always at work on the question how God could be propitiated, the idea

of a sacrifice of something valuable to them was very likely to arise. A modern English writer, a profound thinker, has suggested that the origin of sacrifices lies deeper yet, and that there is in the human mind an intuitive perception of the truth, that the forfeiture of *life* is the penalty due to transgression. But as man had no right to take his own life, he might be led to offer that of some animal as a substitute."

"After all, mother," said Fanny, hesitatingly, "it does not seem as if God need have given his own Son; — could not men have been saved in some easier way?"

"That is a question, my child, which indicates the low and inadequate views of sin common to the unrenewed heart. Yes; God might have pardoned sin on easier terms, if he could have broken his word, sullied his holiness, trampled on his justice, abrogated his law, — in a word, if he could have ceased to be God. Having once given a law, and appended to it the awful penalty, *The soul that sinneth, it shall die*, he could

do no otherwise than he has done ; he could reconcile justice with mercy in no less costly way. No *man* could have stepped forth as mediator between God and his rebellious creatures, for every man is himself stained with sin ; no angel could have made the required atonement, for angels belonged to a different race, — angels could render no more than the obedience required of them ; — an angel might have sacrificed himself for men, but where would have been the evidence of God's regard to the majesty of his insulted law furnished by the death of Christ ? ”

There was a pause of some length, which neither of the children seemed inclined to break. At length their mother resumed :

“ There is one point further to be considered, in relation to this subject. We have seen that there is in man a universal sense of the need of pardon, flowing from the universal consciousness of guilt. This consciousness was like a wound festering in the hearts of men, galling and chafing them,

inflicting perpetual misery, and leading to the practice of penances and sacrifices, with a view to propitiate their Creator. From the same source, aided, perhaps, by traditions handed down from the earliest times, sprang a belief, not very definite, but still actual, that a deliverer sent by God would one day appear, and become the Saviour of the world. Now, the Bible contains an account of such a Deliverer, who *has* appeared, and made atonement for the sins of men. It invites men to believe in him as a Redeemer, and assures those who do, that, in so doing, they shall find the burden of guilt removed, and the fear of God's wrath dispelled. It becomes a question, then, of no little interest, — Do these effects actually follow faith in Christ? For, if this way of pardon is one provided by God, they ought to follow. Do you not see this?"

"O, yes, mother, — perfectly," replied James.

"And you know, too, enough of the ex-

perience of Christians, from what you have heard and read, to know that these effects always *do* follow faith in Christ. The more a man has suffered from anxiety, remorse and apprehension, on account of sin, the more sensible and ravishing will be his joy, when he feels that his sins are pardoned. As the excellent Leighton says, 'That burden taken off, the soul can go light; yea, can leap and dance under all other burdens. O, how it feels itself nimble, as a man eased of a load that he was even fainting under! O, how sweet a burden, instead of this, is that engagement of obedience and love to him as our Redeemer, which is all he lays upon us!'

"But we must leave the subject here. The topic for our next conversation will be, Does the Gospel supply those *motives* and *helps* to right-doing,—in other words, those means of *regeneration*,—which man needs?"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GOSPEL FURNISHES THOSE AIDS WHICH MAN NEEDS
TO RESTORE HIM TO THE LIKENESS OF GOD.

“MOTHER,” said Fanny, as they seated themselves for conversation on the succeeding Sabbath evening, “will you let me read you a piece of poetry, before we begin to talk? It is about the subject of our last conversation, and I found it in Campbell’s Poems.”

“Yes, my dear; I should like to hear it.”
Fanny read as follows:—

“But Heaven had gifts for sinful men,
I little knew or thought of then;
And on my night of fear and sin
A ray of peace at last broke in,—
A blessed, bright, benignant ray,
The herald of eternal day.
In this dark bondage as I sate,
Wrapt up in my approaching fate,

A message reached me, — whence or how,
I knew not then, I know not now ;
Unless some angel, in his flight,
Touched by my dark and piteous plight,
Transgressed the bounds he was assigned,
And dropped it on my sullen mind.
But there it was, as clear and bright
As if transcribed in lines of light.
It fixed and filled my inward eye,
And made my heart run o'er with joy ; —
That blessed truth, that heavenly strain,
My soul and it ne'er part again :
I'll spend on it my latest breath,
And hug it in the arms of death ;
I'll bear it to the judgment seat,
And cast it down at Jesus' feet ;
It then shall be my only plea,
For oh ! it tells my Judge that he
Upon the cross vouchsafed to die,
To save from hell such worms as I !”

“They are very forcible and beautiful lines,” said her mother. “How I wish, my dear Fanny, that you—that both of you—could utter them from the heart, and as descriptive of your own experience !”

“How I wish so too !” thought Fanny ; but she did not utter the wish. Even the

presence of James was a sufficient restraint to prevent her from expressing the feeling to which, perhaps, she would have given utterance, had she been alone with her mother. At length she said, —

“I have tried to think about our subject to-day, mother, but I could not make out anything.”

“Perhaps I can help you, by placing the question to be thought of in a somewhat clearer light,” replied her mother. “You perceive that man, as a *guilty* creature, — that is, a creature *having sinned*, and so contracted guilt, — needed *pardon* for the past. Next, as a *depraved* creature, — that is, a creature possessing inclinations to evil, — he needed something for the future; some new aids and helps to goodness; some security that he should not commit the same sins again. For, suppose that God should now declare to you that all your past offences were cancelled, do you not see that, unless a change were wrought in you, you would immediately contract new guilt, by repeat-

ing the same sins for which you had been pardoned?"

James and Fanny both replied in the affirmative. Some years before, they would have hesitated to do this, and would have thought that by "trying very hard" they might succeed in obeying the law of God. But in the repeated trials they had already made, they had gained too sad an experience of their own weakness, to leave any room for hesitation now.

"It is evident, then," continued their mother, "that the Bible, if it is to do anything effectual for man, must provide some remedy for this depravity of his nature,—some new motives, or aids, or both, to the practice of what is right. The question, then, is, *does* the Bible furnish any such motives or aids?"

"I have thought of one thing," said James. — "If there could be no certain knowledge of a future state, and of heaven and hell, without the Bible, as you showed us the other day, then there could be no

motives to do right, except those drawn from the present life."

"I might have thought of that, if I had not been very stupid," observed Fanny.

"That is a correct inference, James," replied his mother. "What were the only motives which the ancient heathen had to the practice of virtue?"

"Why, I suppose they had those which you were speaking of, two or three evenings ago,—their consciences reproved them, and made them feel unhappy when they did wrong;—and then they often found, by experience, that they were punished in other ways."

"Very well. But these motives, as we have seen, were wholly insufficient to restrain the sinful inclinations and boisterous passions of men. Now, the Bible comes in and tells them that these punishments which they experience in the providence of God for wrong-doing are only introductory to far severer punishments, which they will receive in the next world, if they per-

sist in the same course. It also tells them that the happiness they experience as a consequence of right-doing will be greatly increased and rendered perpetual in the life to come, if they persevere in right-doing. Now, do you not see that the motives to do right, and avoid doing wrong, are far stronger than they were before?"

"O, yes," said Fanny, "much stronger."

"As much so," added James, "as eternity is longer than time."

"But, after all, if the Bible had left the matter here, do you suppose that men generally would have been allured to practise virtue, and abstain from vice?"

"No, mother, I don't think they would; for, even now, they are not. It seems as if hardly anybody believed the Bible, for they go on to sin just the same as if there were no heaven and no hell."

"Yes, they do; — and what do you think is the cause?"

"I suppose because they have such wicked hearts."

“And does a man’s belief that he will be punished for continuing in a certain course have any tendency to change his *heart*, that is, to make him cease to *love* that course?”

“Not at all, it seems to me.”

“Then it is evident that something more is still wanted than the revelation of a future state of rewards and punishments. The utmost that could be effected by threatenings and promises would be a change of the outward conduct; and even this is wrought but in a few instances. Men are so in love with sin that they will not give it up, even when they know that it will expose them to punishment. But, to work a change in the *heart*, in the inward *disposition*, evidently something is required very different from rewards and punishments. There are but two ways in which we can suppose a change in the disposition and state of the affections to be accomplished: one is by the presentation of some new truths, addressed to the affections and suited to act upon them; the other, by a direct acting of

Almighty power upon them, so as to transform them, and make them the opposite of what they were before. Now, both these methods God employs, and has revealed both in the Scriptures. Do you know to what I refer?"

"By the new truths, I suppose you mean the doctrine of an atonement through Christ."

"Yes, that is what I mean. By revealing the way of atonement through Christ, God presents himself to his creatures in a new attitude, — a new relation. Instead of appealing to their hopes and fears, — as he does in his system of retributions, — he appeals directly to their affections. He gives them a proof of his *love*, — the greatest he could have given, — and, in so doing, presents the strongest claim to their love in return. He takes a course which, if his creatures have one particle of ingenuousness of feeling, and of gratitude, must break their hearts, — must lead them to his feet like penitent prodigals. There is nothing else

that he *could* do, — even he, the omnipotent Jehovah, — that would give him anything like such powerful claims to their love, and gratitude, and obedience, as this does. If this does not move them, nothing can. If this plan for their recovery fails, nothing would succeed. The motives to holiness and obedience drawn from the cross of Christ are infinitely the strongest which it is possible to conceive of, and evidently the strongest that are at the disposal of God himself. Do you not see this ?”

“Yes, mother,” replied Fanny, with a faltering voice. She felt that she had disregarded all these obligations.

“But this is not all that God has done, in the way of providing motives and helps to goodness,” continued her mother. “Even this would not have been sufficient alone. By the power of his Spirit he operates directly upon the hearts of men, transforming them into the image of his dear Son. He offers them the aids of this Spirit so long as they remain in the world : offers him to

them as an Enlightener, to instruct their ignorance; as a Sanctifier, to cleanse them from pollution; and as a Comforter, to relieve them in distress. You see, then, that the Bible offers not only *motives* to virtue stronger than any others, but *aids* in the acquisition of it — aids which our sinfulness renders indispensable. In both these features, — the doctrine of Christ, and the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, — it is *absolutely* and essentially different from every system of human invention.

“And this difference is *everything*. If other religious systems had equalled Christianity in the purity of their precepts, and in the amount of light they were able to throw on the character of God and the destiny of man, yet, so long as they could provide no way of pardon for the guilty, and no means of regeneration for the spiritually dead, they would have been impotent and useless. And therefore Augustine said, ‘I find in the writings of Plato and Cicero, and other philosophers, many eloquent and

profound sayings; but nowhere do I find *this* saying, '*Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.*' And now do you not see that God has provided everything necessary to secure man's salvation?"

James replied "Yes;" but Fanny hesitated. She wished to say something like this, — that she did not find the Gospel sufficient for *her* wants, since her heart remained unchanged, in spite of all that God had done. Her mother understood, from her broken words, and the tears that filled her eyes, what she would have said, and replied to it. "I do not say that God will *force* any man to be saved; — I say that he has made provision for the salvation of every man, but it rests with each individual whether he will accept those provisions or not. He sees man lying in utter weakness and helplessness, unable to originate in himself one right thought or purpose, and he comes and invites him to enter into union with Christ, — to receive Christ as his *life*, and from him to

receive those hourly supplies of grace he needs. If the sinner rejects this offer, nothing more can be done for him. But consider what sin is shown in the rejection of such gracious offers. Here is a passage which I had marked to read to you:—
'Either the human heart is incapable, from its nature, of feeling love, or that man will feel it who, enveloped in ignominy as a garment, has seen the God of glory descending even to him, to seek him in the depths of his disgrace; who, from the gloom and sorrow in which his conscience kept him plunged, has seen himself transported into a region of light and happiness; who, in respect to himself, has seen verified that amazing language of the prophet, "In all their afflictions he was afflicted;" who has seen,—oh mystery! oh miracle!—his God travelling by his side in the rugged path of life,—nay, voluntarily assuming the burden which was crushing him,—a God humbled,—a God weeping,—a God anguished,—a God dying!'

“But we must bring our conversation to a close, though the subject is by no means exhausted. I had intended to refer to the argument from experience, under this head, as I did under the last; but we must postpone it.”

“What will be our next subject, mother?” asked James. “I believe we have gone through the plan you read to us.”

“Yes, but there are still some points to be considered, which we will take up in our next conversation.”

CHAPTER XIV.

THE EFFECTS OF THE GOSPEL ON THE HEARTS OF MEN
PROVE IT TO BE FROM GOD.

“WHAT did you mean, mother, by the *argument from experience*, which you spoke of just at the close of our last conversation?” asked Fanny.

“I told you that man, as a fallen being, had two wants, — the want of *pardon*; and the want of *regeneration*, — that is, of a change of heart — of being made holy. We saw that the Gospel provides a mode of pardon; and that this mode was found, experimentally, to answer the purpose for which it was contrived, — that is, persons who tried it found a *sense* of pardon imparted to them, and the fear of punishment taken away. Now, is the same thing true in relation to the other particular? Do those persons who make trial of the Gospel

actually find the love of sin taken away, and a new principle of holiness imparted? Do they find that the efforts against sinful habits, which, when made in their own strength, had proved so unavailable, are successful when made in reliance on the promised aid of the Holy Spirit?"

"I suppose they do," replied Fanny.

"This is an argument which, to the heart of the Christian, is so convincing, that it supersedes every other. When a man *feels* that he daily receives strength to overcome temptation and to bear trial; when he finds himself daily drawn nearer to God, in the use of the means pointed out by the Bible; when he receives answers to prayer, and experiences the truth of the promises, — he has a kind of evidence for the truth of the Gospel, superior to every other."

"But a person might perhaps be deceived," said James; "he might imagine that he had felt such and such things, when he had not."

"It is true that persons sometimes delude

themselves with imagining that they have experienced what they have not; but it is also true that a man *may* have experiences of such a nature, and so often and distinctly repeated, that he cannot doubt in relation to them, any more than he can doubt of his own existence. It is the case with many Christians, that, at first, and, perhaps, for some time after their hearts are renewed, they have many doubts of the genuineness of their own feelings, — they fear they may have mistaken their own fancies for true religious experiences; but as they go on, day after day, receiving fuller manifestations of God's love, and richer supplies of his grace, and more marked answers to prayer, their confidence strengthens, and, at last, reaches the point of absolute conviction."

"But," said Fanny, hesitatingly, "if they doubt, — it seems to me that it is against religion, if they doubt at all."

"I do not mean that they doubt the truth of religion, but they doubt whether they

really possess it : and this is nothing against the truth of religion ; for, suppose a man laboring under a severe disease has taken a medicine, for the first time, which professes to be, and which really is, a specific for that disease. But the medicine does *not* profess to effect a complete cure at once, — it requires repeated applications to do this. Now, the individual in question, from taking too small a portion of the medicine, or from the extreme virulence of his disease, may begin to experience its salutary effects very slowly, — so much so that he may doubt, for a time, whether he is receiving any benefit or not. Yet, as day by day he gains new vigor and elasticity, receives new strength and comfort, finds one painful symptom after another disappearing, and one mark of health after another returning, his confidence in the remedy may, — nay, *must*, increase, till it becomes entire and absolute. Is not this plain ?”

“ Yes, mother, very plain,” replied Fanny.

“ But then, mother,” said James, “ this

may be very good kind of proof for the man himself, but it could not be for other people."

"Not so good for other people, I admit," replied his mother; "but, certainly, other people, who witnessed these effects, and had the man's own testimony that they were attributable to the medicine and nothing else, would be obliged to believe him, unless they had some valid objections against his testimony; and, in the case supposed, they naturally *would* believe him. Much more would they do so, if, instead of *one* case of cure effected by the medicine in question, they had witnessed hundreds and thousands, — nay, had seen whole communities and nations of sick people restored to health by its means."

"But, mother," said Fanny, "it does not seem — we have never seen such wonderful effects produced by religion as you describe."

"No, you have not *seen* its effects on nations, because you live in the midst of a nominally Christian nation, where the indirect effects of Christianity are widely dif-

fused, and have been for centuries. To witness these effects, you must have lived in the days of the Apostles and early Christians; or you must have lived for twenty years with some of our missionaries in the Sandwich Islands, or in South Africa. But you have read many of their accounts of the changes wrought by Christianity among those degraded heathen, and know that nothing could be more wonderful. And, still further, you have yourselves witnessed, in single cases, the most surprising effects wrought by the power of religion."

"Have we? — what cases do you mean, mother?" asked Fanny. "O, I guess I know: are you not thinking of old Williams?"

"Yes, of him among others."

"Well, certainly, his case is as strong a one as could be," said James. "I remember he used to swear dreadfully every time he opened his mouth, so that I used to wonder, sometimes, he did not fall down dead."

“Yes, and you know he was always drunk, and used to treat his wife and children dreadfully,” said Fanny. “Don’t you remember the time we met his little Sarah, crying so terribly, with her face all bloody, and her arm black and blue with the bruises he had given her?”

“Yes, I remember it,” replied James; “and now he seems to be one of the very best men in the world. He is so gentle, and kind, and humble, that you never would know him to be the same man.”

“Yes,” said Fanny, “I like to have him come here to saw wood; — he almost always says something to me about religion, in such a kind, pleasant way, that I like to hear him.”

“Do you suppose,” inquired her mother, “that anything beside the Gospel could have wrought such a change in him?”

“No, mother, I think not; and I know he thinks so too.”

“There is still another thing which may be said in reply to your remark, James, —

that this kind of proof is good only for Christians themselves. It is a kind of proof which may become good for all who will make trial of it, and which the Bible itself invites all men to bring to the test of experience. In the case of the medicine I supposed a while ago, a man who should refuse to make trial of it would have no right to question the reality of its effect on others. If he doubts of its efficacy, let him try it; and then, if it does him no good, he may pronounce it worthless. But no one — no, not *one* — can be found, who has made this trial of the Gospel way of salvation, and has found it to fail.

“On the contrary, every person who has put it to this test will say, ‘I am myself a witness of the truth of Christianity. When I began to study the Bible candidly and prayerfully, I found described there every symptom of my spiritual malady. I had learned, by repeated experience, that I was wholly incapable of restraining my own passions, of obeying my own convictions of

right, of acting in such a way as to secure my own happiness. There was a perpetual war in my soul, — a war between conscience, and reason, and my higher instincts, on the one hand, and my unruly desires, appetites, and passions, on the other. Besides, I bore about with me a sense of the displeasure of God, and of the entire moral distance between him and my soul, which effectually prevented any confidence in him, and made me regard him as a stern and angry Judge, rather than as a tender Father. Now, the Bible exactly described my case, and presented a remedy. It invited me to *believe in the Lord Jesus Christ*, and assured me that in thus believing I should find pardon, peace, and holiness. I accepted the invitation, and found the truth of these promises. My fears and remorse were vanquished, harmony was restored in my soul, and I have begun to realize that victory over sin, which I trust to experience more fully in this life, and perfectly in the life to come.'

“Now, my dear children, this is a test to which you, as well as others, are invited to subject the Bible. O, that you would be persuaded to do so at once!”

Fanny, whose nature was impressible, and whose feelings were easily excited, could not restrain, though she sought to conceal, her tears. James, however, appeared unaffected, and soon asked,

“Is there any other point you were going to talk about this evening?”

“Yes, there were others, but I shall be able only to glance at them. I wish you to understand that, in conversations like ours, many proofs must be passed over, which are not adapted to your capacities at present, but which you will appreciate when you are older. Many others we have but touched upon, which you will, some time or other, I hope, investigate more fully. On the subject of the *adaptedness of Christianity to man*, and its consequent *adaptedness to universal diffusion*, much might be said; but I wish to direct your attention, for

a few moments, to a part of the subject you are more capable of comprehending, — namely, *the character of Christ*. Do you understand the nature of the proof to be drawn from this source ? ”

Fanny at once said, “No, not exactly ;” and while James was considering whether he did or not, his mother went on :

“Christ, you know, appeared as the *Founder* of Christianity. He is the very centre of the whole system. He is himself the *Example* and embodiment of its precepts. He is the *Mediator*, who claims, by his death, to have reconciled God and man. He is the *King*, who is to govern the subjects he has redeemed from the bondage of sin. He is the *Messiah*, who answers to all the prophecies of the Old Testament. He is the *Judge*, who is to award eternal life to his followers, and to punish with everlasting destruction his incorrigible enemies. Thus he holds the most intimate relation to every part of the system. It must all stand or fall with him. Evidently, therefore, an

examination of his character and conduct must constitute a very important branch of our proof."

"Yes, mother, so I should think," said James. "I am afraid we shall not have time to talk much about it this evening, it is so late now. I almost wish you would leave it, and take a whole evening for it."

"Very well, my dear, I have no objection; — let it be so."

CHAPTER XV.

CHARACTER AND CONDUCT OF CHRIST. — TESTIMONY OF INFIDELS.

“MOTHER,” said James, “I think I shall be more interested in our conversation to-night, because I have been reading the life of Mahomet, lately.”

“Yes, very likely. Mahomet, as the founder of a religious system, is very naturally brought into comparison with Christ; and his character and conduct give us some notion of what we might expect from any mere man, who should claim to originate a religion adapted to the wants of mankind. But, after all, the pretensions of Mahomet were so inferior to those of Christ, that he had a far easier part to play, on the supposition that both were impostors. Mahomet professed to be nothing more than a man, a mere prophet, to whom God had made a new revelation. Christ, on the other hand,

professed to be God, and yet man, — to unite in himself two natures, the union of which had never been heard of or conceived, and the very idea of whose union seemed to human reason incredible and contradictory. As a consequence of this double nature, he professed to be able to mediate between God and man, — to make atonement in his own person for the sins of the whole human race, and to become the author of eternal salvation to all who should believe. Consider how infinitely superior were these claims to those ever put forth by Mahomet, or any other impostor.”

“O yes; that is plain enough, though I never thought of it.”

“Then, what various offices he had to fill, and what numerous and seemingly incompatible relations to sustain! In the words of Wilson, an able English writer on this topic, — ‘He assumed the titles of the Saviour, the Redeemer, the great Prophet of the church, the King of Israel, the appointed Judge of quick and dead. He per-

formed, moreover, miraculous works in support of his pretensions; he healed the sick, raised the dead, expelled demons, suspended the laws of nature, and exercised, in his own person, a creative power. Again, he assumed, as a consequence of all this, to be the Teacher of truth, the Light of the world, the Expounder and Vindicator of the moral law, the authoritative Legislator of mankind. Notwithstanding these exalted pretensions, his office as Messiah involved the most apparently contradictory characteristics. It required him to be the Son of man; the servant and messenger of his heavenly Father; subject to human infirmities and sorrows; obedient to all the ceremonial requirements and moral injunctions of the Mosaic law; — *a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*. All this, therefore, our Lord professed himself to be.' "

"How strange it seems to me," said Fanny, "that I should never have thought of these things myself! But that is because we begin to hear about Christ as soon as we

are born, almost; and we get so used to it, that it seems like an old story. I wish the Bible could be as new to us as it is to the heathen !”

“It would be always new to us, I suppose, if our hearts were right,” said her mother. “You know the angels are represented as always looking, with intense and unabated curiosity, into the great mystery of God’s love to man. And, no doubt, the glorified spirits of the redeemed will find the theme always new, throughout the ages of eternity.”

“I never thought, before,” said James, “how very different the claims and pretensions of Christ were from those of any other person who ever lived.”

“Yes, and in acting out these various characters, and sustaining these relations, he was exposed to the view of men. He did not retire into a cave, out of the way of temptation, but his whole life was public. He shunned no opportunity of mingling with men; in the market-place, the syna-

gogue, the street, the desert, at the table, by the well, and on the mountain, he was ever ready to teach, to counsel and to warn. He was brought into the most various and the most trying circumstances; subjected to want, suffering and ignominy, and yet tempted by urgent offers to make him a king; he was visited and questioned by all the different religious sects among the Jews; he was brought before a Jewish council and a Roman governor; he was finally tried, condemned and executed, all in public; — yet never, for one moment, did he descend from the moral elevation which became the Son of God, and the friend and Redeemer of sinners. Never did he commit a single act which rendered him unworthy to be the example and model of the human race.”

“If Christ had been an impostor, he would have wished to keep more out of the way of people, I should think,” said James; “for, of course, the more he was seen and known, the more chances there were of his being discovered to be one.”

“Yes, and, beside this, no impostor, no mere man who came with the pretensions of Christ, would have neglected the *aid* he might receive from outward pomp and splendor. He would have feared to be despised by the people, if he associated with them on terms of familiarity, and would have wished to surround himself at once with the pomp and parade of royalty. But there were many reasons why Jesus, being what he really was, should have chosen to occupy a poor and humble station. Can you think of any of them?”

“I suppose one reason was, that he might set an example of humility and self-denial to his followers.”

“Yes; it was, as was everything else about him, an exemplification of his own precepts. He taught his disciples not to ‘labor for the meat that perisheth,’ not to lay up for themselves ‘treasures on earth,’ — to ‘take the lowest place,’ to deny themselves and ‘take up the cross.’ He could not have added, ‘*and follow me,*’ unless he

had preceded them in the same path. In fact, the value of Christ's *example* depended very greatly on his moving in a lowly sphere, practising the ordinary duties, and filling the common offices, of every-day life. But will you mention some of the virtues which shone conspicuous in our Saviour's character?"

"I think there is nothing so wonderful as the *forgiving temper* he manifested," said Fanny, — "his praying for his enemies while they were putting him to such torture!"

"Yes, and his *meekness*," said James, "when they struck him, and spit upon him. I do not see how he could bear that."

"There are so many things to say, that I am puzzled which to mention first," said Fanny.

"You might name his *submission to the will of his Father*; his *constancy* and *fortitude*; his *prayerfulness*; his *compassion* and *benevolence*, and many other traits; but these you can observe in your reading. One thing

I wish you to notice, however, and that is, the way in which we arrive at the knowledge of our Lord's character. You will notice that no one of the Evangelists appears to have formed the intention of drawing a perfect character, or, in fact, any character at all. Neither of them ever calls our attention to any one of the excellent traits exhibited, or indulges himself in any remarks whatever on the circumstances he details. Each one gives his simple narrative, sometimes so briefly as to be hardly intelligible without a reference to the others, evidently relating his facts with perfect honesty and unconcern, and leaving us to draw our own inferences. Without manifesting the least anxiety as to the impression they shall make, or seeming to be at all aware that they are relating anything extraordinary, they nevertheless give us a character absolutely without spot or blemish; a character in which the veriest malice can detect no stain or flaw; a character so lovely, so inimitable, so dignified, so sublime, as to com-

prise, by universal consent, all the excellences and perfections of which human nature is susceptible, in a form the most engaging, tender and elevated."

"Mother, I should think that even infidels would have to admit that the character of Christ is perfect," said Fanny.

"They *are* forced to admit it, my dear," replied her mother. "Probably the most striking testimony ever borne to this point is that of the French infidel philosopher, Rousseau. It has been so often quoted as to be familiar to most readers, but may not be so to you. If you will bring me Rousseau's works from the book-case, I will read it to you."

Fanny brought the book, and her mother read as follows :

"'Is it possible that he whose history the Gospel records can be but a mere man? Does he speak in the tone of an enthusiast, or the ambitious leader of a sect? What mildness, what purity, in his manners! What touching grace in his instructions!

what elevation in his maxims! what profound wisdom in his discourses! what presence of mind! what ingenuity, and what justness, in his answers! What government of his passions! * * * What prejudice, what blindness or dishonesty, is that which dares to compare the son of Sophroniscus with the son of Mary! What a difference between the two! Socrates dying without pain, without disgrace, easily sustains his part to the last; and if his death, however easy, had not crowned his life, it might have been doubted whether Socrates, with all his wisdom, was anything more than a vain sophist. * * * The death of Socrates, peaceably philosophizing with his friends, appears the mildest that could be desired; that of Jesus, expiring in tortures, mocked, reviled and insulted by a whole nation, is the most horrible that could be feared. Socrates, receiving the poisoned cup, blessed the executioner, who presented it in tears; Jesus, in the midst of excruciating tortures, prayed for his merciless tormentors. Yes! if the

life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God ! ' ' "

"Is it possible that a man can say all that, and yet remain an infidel ? " said James.

"Yes, for, after having said this, he adds, '*Yet I cannot believe.*' "

"It seems impossible, incredible ! " said Fanny.

"But, perhaps, mother," suggested James, "he thought of the character of Christ only as a beautiful picture drawn by the Evangelists, and did not believe that such a person ever really existed."

"That supposition is precluded by what he goes on to say. After the passage I read to you, he adds :

" ' Shall we suppose the evangelic history a mere fiction ? Indeed, my friend, it bears not the marks of fiction ; — on the contrary, the history of Socrates, which nobody presumes to doubt, is not so well attested as that of Jesus. Such a supposition, in fact,

only shifts the difficulty, without obviating it; for it is more inconceivable that a number of persons should agree to write such a history, than that one should be found to be the subject of it. The Jewish authors were incapable of the style of the gospels, and strangers to their morality; and, in short, the stamp of truth they bear is so striking and inimitable, that the inventor would be a more wonderful character even than the hero.' ”

“That settles the question, of course,” remarked James. “But how *can* you account for it, then, mother, that he remained an unbeliever ? ”

“Only in the same way in which we can account for the unbelief of the Pharisees who themselves *witnessed* the miracles, and beheld the holy example, of our Lord; — they *would* not believe, because his teachings condemned their wickedness and hypocrisy. Rousseau was a thoroughly *bad man*; his life was stained with the most odious vices, and of course he hated the light. No

amount of evidence would convince such a man."

"It seems very dreadful that there should be such men," said Fanny.

"Yes; it throws light on the meaning of such awful passages as 'treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath.' But there is an individual of the human race, exceeding in guilt, perhaps, every other, who gave a still stronger involuntary testimony to the truth of Christ's claims, though not in words; — do you know to whom I refer?"

"I am sure I do not," said Fanny, — "unless," she added, after a pause, "unless you mean Judas. But how did he testify to the truth of Christ's claims?"

"Why, by the remorse he exhibited for having betrayed him. If Christ were really an impostor, — and Judas had every opportunity to know whether he was or not, — he deserved a worse fate than that he suffered. Yet Judas was so overwhelmed with remorse for what he had done, that he could not endure life; his ill-gotten gains became

hateful to him; he threw down the thirty pieces of silver in the temple, and departed and went and hanged himself."

"I wonder I never thought of that as being a testimony in favor of Christ, before," said Fanny. "It is the strongest kind of testimony, too."

"Yes, none could be stronger. But I think we must bring our conversation to a close, now. We have finished the consideration of the *internal* evidences, and shall begin upon the *external* next Sabbath. Some of these, as not being adapted to your comprehension at present, I shall but glance at, or wholly omit. Others I shall dwell upon at some length. The two principal points will be the evidence drawn from *miracles*, and that from *prophecy*. The first of these we will consider next Sabbath."

CHAPTER XVI.

EVIDENCE FROM MIRACLES.

“WE have come back, now, to one of the questions you asked us at first, mother,” said James, — “what credentials or tokens God could give to show that a revelation was from him?”

“Yes, and I believe we concluded then that the power of working miracles was, so far as men can see, the only credential, not liable to be denied or counterfeited, which he could give.”

“But miracles have been denied, — have they not?” asked James; “and they have certainly been counterfeited.”

“I mean, not liable to be denied by the candid and unprejudiced. Everything may be and will be denied, as we saw yesterday, by the wilfully blind. As to their being counterfeited, the few miserable at-

tempts at impostures of this sort, made by wicked and designing men, in different ages, are so widely and ludicrously different from many of the stupendous miracles recorded in the Bible, that they form no exception to my remark. What, for instance, could be more unlike the pretended popish miracles, where an image moves its eyes, or sweats blood, — instances wrought in secret, in the walls of a church or convent, and where deception would be so easy, — what could be more unlike these than the dividing of the Red Sea, for the Israelites to pass through?”

“A difference, indeed!” said Fanny.

“To return, then: you see that miracles are *probable*, on the supposition that a revelation was to be given, because miracles are the most suitable and natural mode of authenticating such a revelation. Now, the question whether miracles really have been performed, or, rather, whether *the* miracles recorded in the Bible were performed, is to be settled in the same way that any other

question of facts is settled, — by an appeal to testimony.”

“That always seems to me such a poor kind of evidence,” said James; — “I mean, I never feel satisfied with it.”

“In that point you are mistaken, my son. I will presently convince you. Do you believe, or not, that there is such a country as England?”

“Certainly, I believe it,” replied James.

“But why, since you have never been there?”

James reflected for a moment. “I believe it because so many others have been there, and have written about it, — because I have seen people who have been there, and because I have seen ships which have come from there, and the passengers and cargoes they have brought.”

“Very well; — that is, you believe it on *testimony*. Now, do you not believe it *as fully* as if you had been to England yourself?”

“Yes, mother, I think I do; — yes, I do,

I am sure. It never occurred to me to doubt it. But then, there is so *much* testimony, — so many thousands of people have been to England, and come back ; and what possible motive could all these people have for pretending there was such a country, if there was not ?”

“ Exactly so. There is a certain *amount* of testimony, then, which will satisfy even you, especially if the thing to be believed is neither incredible or improbable. Now, let us see what this amount is. Suppose that while you were away at school, last year, you had received a letter from Fanny, in which she told you that our house had taken fire, and been burned to the ground. Suppose she had related the whole affair circumstantially, — describing the origin and progress of the fire, the amount of damage done to the furniture, the distress in which we were plunged, and the arrangements we had made in consequence, — should you have believed this relation, or not ?”

“Certainly, mother, I should have believed it.”

“Here, then, the testimony of one witness would have been sufficient. Suppose, moreover, that you had, soon after, received letters from your father and from me, separately, detailing the same facts, with additional particulars and remarks, — you would have no doubt at all of the matter.”

“No, mother, — certainly not.”

“But suppose, still further, that you should be visited by several persons from this place, all of whom should agree in the same statement, — this would be an additional weight of evidence; and if you should, after a while, return, and find us settled in a new house, while only the blackened ruins of the former remained, you would have an amount of evidence as satisfactory as if you had witnessed the burning of the building with your own eyes.”

“Yes, but the seeing of the ruins would not be *testimony*, you know, mother.”

“Very true; but it would be a corroboration of testimony, nearly resembling, as I shall show you, corroborations we have of the Bible narratives. After all, you know, you would not have seen the fire, but only its effects.”

“However, the burning of a house is not a thing improbable,” said James. “I should believe it on much less evidence. But I see that such an amount of evidence as you supposed would lead me to believe something very improbable.”

“It is evident, then, that there is a kind and amount of evidence sufficient to prove any fact not absolutely impossible. There are certain marks which, if they should all be found to exist in relation to a certain asserted fact, would put that fact beyond all doubt. These marks, as laid down by Mr. Leslie, are four :

“1. That the fact be such as men’s *outward senses* can judge of;

“2. That it be performed *publicly*, in the presence of witnesses;

“3. That there be *public monuments* and *actions* kept up in memory of it; and

“4. That such monuments and actions be established and commence *at the time of the fact.*”

“O dear! I am afraid I shall not understand all that,” said Fanny.

“Why, Fanny! — it is as simple as anything!” exclaimed her brother.

“You will understand them, my dear, so soon as I illustrate them by an example,” said her mother. “And I will take the same one I mentioned before. Moses declares, in one of his books, that he brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, by the command of God; that when Pharaoh pursued them, and there appeared no way of escape, the Red Sea opened before them, and that they passed through it in safety, while the Egyptians, who pursued them, were overtaken by the sea, and perished before their eyes. Now, would it have been possible for Moses to publish such an account as this, and make the peo-

ple believe it, if it were not true? Could he persuade six hundred thousand men that they had really passed through a divided sea, if they had not?"

"No, mother, — certainly not."

"Then here are the first two marks. The thing done was such as men's *outward senses* could judge of; and it was done *publicly*, in the presence of witnesses."

"But although he could not have published his books in the lifetime of these men," said Fanny, "could they not have been written by some one afterwards, and called the books of Moses?"

"That is the very objection which Mr. Leslie answers," observed her mother. "I cannot read the whole of his argument, for it is too long; but I will give you the substance of it. It is stated in the books themselves that they *were* written by Moses, and kept in the ark from his time (Deut. 31: 24—26). Now, if this were not so, everybody would have known it; and when the books were first published, they would

know that they had never heard of them before. Besides, they would naturally ask, 'If all these wonderful things happened to our fathers, — if they were brought out of Egypt in so wonderful a manner, wandered forty years through the wilderness, living on bread from heaven, drinking water brought out of a rock, and guided by a pillar of fire, — how comes it that we have never heard of any of these things before? Surely the memory of such wonderful things would have been handed down from one generation to another, and we should have heard of them before now.' ”

“O yes,” said Fanny; “I see it would not be so easy as I thought to cheat people.”

“But you have not considered half the difficulties. The five books of Moses contain the Jewish *code of laws*, instituted, as they declare, by him, and in force since his time. How could a nation be persuaded that they had always lived under a code of laws which they then heard of for the first time? Moreover, there are in these books

a thousand allusions to rites, ceremonies, institutions, and feasts, and to the events in memory of which they were established, that absolutely forbid any attempt at palming them off on the people as the production of any other author, or at any other age, than the real one. Take the Passover, for example; — how could a nation be made to believe that they had observed such a feast every year, in memory of a certain event, if they had never done it? The fact that such a feast had been observed for years, and that it was in commemoration of God's passing over the Israelites when he slew the first-born, must have been known to every Israelite, and it afforded to each one a confirmation of the truth of Moses' account. *Circumcision* was another observance, which they could not be made to believe they had practised, unless they had done so."

"Yes, that is very plain," said James, drawing a long breath, as if relieved. "I do not see any possibility of deception."

“I will mention one more illustration,” said his mother. “You have both of you seen the Bunker-hill monument; — in commemoration of what was it erected?”

“Of the battle of Bunker-hill,” replied both at once.

“This will do for an example, although it does not, strictly speaking, answer to one of Mr. Leslie’s marks; for it was not erected at *the time* of the battle. But it was so soon after the time, and during the lifetime of some who were present at the battle, that it amounts to the same thing. Now, suppose that, two or three hundred years hence, some person should undertake to deny that any such battle ever took place, and should say that the monument was erected in memory of something else, could he succeed in persuading the nation to adopt this belief?”

“Why, no, — of course not,” said James; “because the memory of the battle will be preserved, and handed down from one generation to another, and of the monument, as

connected with it; and, besides, there are a great many histories of the battle already written, and some of these certainly will last.”

“Very well. Now, if you turn to the third and fourth chapters of Joshua, you will find an account of the miraculous dividing of the river Jordan, and of the passage of the children of Israel through the river. As soon as they were passed over, God commanded Joshua to set up twelve stones, one for each tribe, as a pillar, in the midst of the river; and this was the reason assigned, ‘That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers, in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones? then ye shall answer them, that the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off; and these stones shall be a memorial unto the children of Israel forever.’

“ ‘Now, to form our argument,’ says Mr.

Leslie, 'let us suppose that there never was any such thing as that passage over Jordan; that these stones at Gilgal had been set up on some unknown occasion; and that some designing man, in an after age, invented this book of Joshua, affirmed that it was written at the time of that imaginary event by Joshua himself, and adduced this pile of stones as a testimony of its truth; would not everybody say to him, "We know this pile very well, but we never before heard of this reason for it, nor of this book of Joshua. Where has it lain concealed all this while? and when and how came you, after so long a period, to find it? Besides, it informs us that this passage over Jordan was solemnly directed to be taught our children, from age to age; and to that end, that they were always to be instructed in the meaning of this particular monument; but we were never taught it ourselves, when we were children, nor did we ever teach it to our children." ' Do you not see the conclusiveness of this reasoning?"

“O yes, mother, perfectly,” replied James.

“I understand it very well, now,” said Fanny; “and I am sure nothing could be plainer. I think we have as good reason to believe in the miracles recorded in the Bible as if we had seen them.”

“But the miracles of Christ,” said James; “we have not the same kind of evidence for them, have we? — that is, there are no monuments or institutions in memory of them.”

“We have institutions and ordinances,” said his mother, “which have come down to us from Christ’s time, and which commemorate some of his acts, though not his miraculous acts, — Baptism and the Lord’s Supper; — and as the whole Gospel narrative must stand or fall together, if one part of it is confirmed by institutions and ordinances, the whole is so confirmed.”

“I was thinking whether the first two marks you mentioned applied to the miracles of Christ,” said James; “and I see they do.”

“Certainly they do, for his miracles were performed in public, and they were such as the senses of men could judge of. Take, for instance, his *feeding the five thousand*, or *stilling the tempest*, or *giving sight to the blind men*, or *healing the lepers*, or *raising Lazarus from the dead*; — there could be no possible deception about them.”

“No,” said James; “even the Pharisees could not deny them. You know what they said about the raising of Lazarus.”

“Moreover, Christ was himself the *subject* of many wonderful miracles, of which, one alone, his resurrection, would be sufficient to establish the truth of Christianity.”

“The chief priests knew that, I suppose, and that was the reason they took so much pains to make the people believe that he had been stolen by his disciples.”

“Yes, and that was the reason why the apostles insisted so much on the fact of the resurrection, in their preaching. If you read the sermons of Peter and Paul, recorded in the book of Acts, you will find

that they constantly appeal to the resurrection of Jesus as an admitted fact, and as one that proves his Divine mission."

"It always seemed strange to me," said Fanny, "that Christ's disciples were so unwilling to believe that he was really risen from the dead, when he had told them so many times beforehand that he should rise."

"It is strange," replied her mother, "though, perhaps, not more strange than many things about ourselves. But do you observe what a powerful *effect* the resurrection of their Master had on them? They, who had been so fearful, timid, and irresolute before, became now bold as lions. Peter, who had 'followed afar off' at his trial, and then openly denied him, addressed an audience in the very city where he was crucified, not many days after, in these words: 'Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, *as ye yourselves also*

know, ye have taken, and, by wicked hands, have crucified and slain.”

“I never noticed the change in them as so remarkable before,” said Fanny; “perhaps because it never seems as if the book of Acts joined right on to the Gospels.”

“But you know that it does, of course. The book of Acts begins with the ascension of Christ, and goes on to relate what happened immediately after. But I want you to observe another characteristic of the miracles of Christ, beside their *publicity* and the impossibility of there being any deception about them, and that is the *benevolent end* for which they were all wrought. He never performed a miracle for the sake of display, and merely to show what he could do; nor did he resort to miracles to supply his own wants, but always to relieve the necessities, or remove the sufferings, of others. This fact the multitude noticed, when they exclaimed, ‘He hath done all things well: he maketh both the blind to see, and the lame to walk.’”

“He must have healed a great many, in all,” said Fanny; “for it often says that *multitudes* came to him, and he healed them.”

“We have seen that the miracles of Christ rest on sufficient evidence, though I have not brought before you nearly all that I might have done. The question now to be answered is, Do these miracles substantiate Christ’s claim to be a teacher sent from God?”

“Why, yes, mother, of course,” replied Fanny; “for if he were not, he could not have performed them.”

“You agree, then, with Nicodemus, in saying, ‘Master, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.’ Did Jesus himself appeal to them as proofs of his Divine mission?”

Fanny could not remember. James said, “Yes, when the disciples of John came to him, to know who he was, he replied, ‘Go

and tell John again the things ye have seen and heard,' &c."

"Very well, then; we have considered to-night an entirely new and distinct species of evidence; and we find it leading us irresistibly to the same conclusion we had reached before, *The Bible is the Word of God*. Next time, we will consider the evidence from Prophecy."

CHAPTER XVII.

EVIDENCE FROM PROPHECY. — NATURE OF THE ARGUMENT.

— OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

“I LIKE this subject, mother,” said Fanny, “because I can understand it easily, and I have found a great many prophecies which have been fulfilled.”

“I am glad to hear it,” replied her mother; “but first tell me what is a *prophecy*?”

“It is telling beforehand something that is going to happen, is it not?” said Fanny.

“Yes, it is the telling beforehand of *something that could be known only to God*. And how does the fulfilment of prophecy furnish an evidence of the truth of revelation?”

“Why, if the revelation contains predictions of things that God only could know, then it follows that God only could have given the revelation.”

“But it seems to me,” said James, “that there would be some danger of deception here, as well as in the case of miracles. Did not the old heathen oracles predict things that came to pass, sometimes?”

His mother smiled, which Fanny observing, laughed outright. “I know what you are laughing at, mother,” said she; — “it is because James always finds something to object to, or to doubt about. I have noticed it a thousand times, — that he never will believe anything if he can help it, while I believe everything that I hear.”

“Two opposite, and, perhaps, equally hurtful extremes,” said her mother. “I have often observed James’ tendency to scepticism, and yours to credulity. A proper medium between the two, — that is, a just caution in receiving and weighing evidence, — is the state of mind most favorable to the discovery of truth. But I will answer your question, my son. Yes, the heathen oracles did pretend, now and then, to predict future events; but you shall judge how much claim

their predictions had to rank with the prophecies of Scripture.

“In the first place, they never undertook to pronounce upon the future, except in compliance with the solicitation of some one who applied to them for information. Of course, their predictions always related to some time not very distant, and events of comparatively trifling importance, about which they could often form some probable conjecture. They never uttered prophecies like those of Scripture, relating to far-distant times, and magnificent events; and their few and petty predictions bear far more resemblance to the foolish pratings of a fortune-telling old woman, than to the sublime utterances of the Sacred Prophets.”

“I wish I could remember something I have read,” said Fanny, “about the answer the oracle gave to Cræsus, when he went to consult it. Do you remember, James?”

“Yes. Cræsus asked the oracle what would be the result of his intended invasion of Persia; and was answered that, ‘If he

crossed the Halys, he should destroy a great empire.' He thought this meant the Persian empire, of course; but when the event turned out differently, the oracle pretended that he had not interpreted the prediction aright."

"This anticipates what I was about to say next," observed his mother, viz., "that the heathen oracles, besides being few and unimportant, were *ambiguous*; that is, so expressed as to be capable of a double meaning. You have given one example, and I will mention another. Pyrrhus, King of Epirus, consulted the oracle, to know whether he should be successful against the Romans. The answer was in two Latin lines, which might be rendered — 'I say that thou, son of Æacus, canst conquer the Romans. Thou shalt go, thou shalt return; never shalt thou perish in war.' Or, it might mean, 'I say that the Romans can conquer thee, son of Æacus. Thou shalt go, thou shalt never return; thou shalt perish in war.' Pyrrhus understood the oracle in a sense favorable to

himself, as Cræsus had done, and, like him, was disappointed; yet the oracle maintained its credit."

"What fools people must have been, in those days!" said Fanny.

"Not greater fools than in these days, I fancy," replied her mother. "So great is man's desire to penetrate into the future, that he will resort to almost any means which seem to promise the gratification of his wishes; and any foolish fortune-teller, or astrologer, who should come here to-morrow, would find some to consult him, and believe in him."

"*I* should not be among them," muttered James, half to himself.

"But to return to the heathen oracles. In spite of all their cunning tricks and ambiguities, they, of course, often failed; and then they had always some plausible excuse at hand. They said the gods were not inclined to answer, or the time had been ill-chosen, or some indispensable ceremony had been omitted, or the inquirer had been

guilty of some sin; and thus, in one way or another, they managed to retain a little credit."

"I wonder at it," said James. "I should think the philosophers would have known better, at any rate."

"Many of them, perhaps all of them, did know better, and did not scruple to ridicule the oracles unmercifully. The Latin poet, Horace, says: 'O, son of Laertes, what I now foretell will either come to pass, or it will not; for the great Apollo has given me the power of divination.' There was a famous soothsayer, named Alexander, of whom his biographer, Lucian, says: 'Thus he delivered oracles and gave responses, but with great prudence, and giving perplexed, doubtful, or obscure answers, *according to the custom of oracles.*'"

"I am glad that everybody was not deceived by them," said Fanny.

"The priests of the heathen oracles, moreover, received *money* for their divinations, — sometimes very large sums, — while the

prophets of Jehovah, so far from being rewarded, often suffered severely for their predictions. You recollect how Micaiah and Jeremiah were thrown into prison, because they would not 'prophesy smooth things' to the monarchs they served."

"I think all you say is true, mother," observed James, "about the heathen oracles; and I am almost afraid to say what I am thinking of, lest you should think I am trying to find objections against the Bible; — but are not many of the predictions found in the Bible very obscure?"

"I do not wish you to hesitate, my son," replied his mother, "to make known any difficulties or objections that rise in your mind; for I cannot possibly answer your difficulties, unless I know them. It is true that the prophecies of Scripture are, to a certain extent, *obscure*; but none of them are *ambiguous*, as were the heathen oracles. That is, they are not susceptible of two meanings, opposite to each other, so that whichever way the event turned out, the

prophecy would appear to be true. On the contrary, they are so plain, that when the fulfilment takes place, there can be no sort of doubt as to the fact of the fulfilment or the meaning of the prophecy. As to the obscurity which really exists, there were very important reasons for it, some of which, perhaps, you can discover."

As neither of the children could think of any reason, their mother went on. "It is evidently inconsistent with God's plan respecting this life as a state of probation, that all his purposes should be known beforehand. In regard to individuals, you can see at once that this would not answer. If you, for instance, were made acquainted with everything that is to befall you in the course of your life, you would be prevented from acting freely; your character would not be developed according to its natural course, and thus God's aim regarding you would not be fulfilled. One great feature of our probation is the uncertainty in which we live with respect to the future. If we

knew, when a sickness attacked us, that we were certainly to recover, and that in a short time, the moral effect of the dispensation would be greatly lessened, if not wholly lost. The same is true of nations. God's providence in regard to them could not be carried on, if prophecy had informed them distinctly of all that was to happen. Do you see this?"

"Yes, mother," replied James; "and, besides, I think that sometimes people would try to prevent the accomplishment of prophecy, if it were not partly obscure."

"Yes, I was about to mention that as a second reason for its obscurity. The Emperor Julian did actually try to rebuild the temple at Jerusalem, in order to falsify the prediction that it should never be rebuilt; but he was stopped, in his foolish and wicked purpose, by balls of fire, which broke out of the ground, and obliged his workmen to cease from their labors."

"I remember reading of that, in Roman history," said James.

“Another reason is,” continued his mother, “that if prophecy were wholly free from obscurity, it might be pretended by objectors that it was fulfilled designedly by the actors in it; that is, they performed the act on purpose to accomplish the prophecy. This has been asserted already by some infidels; and you may judge with how much more apparent ground it would have been said, if prophecy had been free from all obscurity. In fact, there is nothing in which the wisdom of God is more conspicuous than in the precise *degree* of obscurity in which prophecy is veiled. It is plain enough to remove all doubt from the mind when it is actually fulfilled, and obscure enough not to defeat the purposes of God, by making them too distinctly known beforehand.”

“I never thought of it so before,” said James; “but it seems very striking now.”

“The argument from this source is a very strong one, and cannot be evaded. Prophecy has been called a *standing miracle*; and it is, indeed, a miracle of the most wonderful

kind. It is not in the fulfilment of detached predictions alone that we see its full weight, though some of these are remarkable in the highest degree; but we must look at the successive prophecies as forming a chain or series, — a wonderful whole, — beginning in obscurity, but gradually becoming plainer and plainer, as the time of accomplishment drew near. Such of the prophecies as related to the Messiah were admirably calculated to keep alive the expectation of him in the minds of the Jewish people, and to prepare the way for his coming, when the fullness of time should arrive. They were also greatly adapted to comfort the hearts of those true saints who ‘waited for the consolation of Israel,’ of whom there were some in every age.”

“In one respect,” said James, “prophecy seems to be better than miracles as a proof — it grows stronger and stronger, as time goes on. In the beginning of the world, men could not have had any proof from prophecy.”

“That is true,” observed his mother, “and

I am glad you have thought of it. Do you recollect any passages in the Bible in which the power of foretelling future events is ascribed to God as an attribute of Deity alone ?”

“I think there is a passage in Isaiah,” said James ; “ but I do not recollect the words.”

“There are several passages in Isaiah ; but probably the one to which you refer is that in which God calls on the idols of the heathen to prove their claims to worship by revealing the future. ‘Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods ; yea, do good or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together. Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of nought ; an abomination is he that chooseth you.’ Peter, also, after speaking of the transfiguration of Christ, which he himself had witnessed, goes on to say, — ‘Moreover, we have a *more sure* word of prophecy, unto which ye do well that ye take heed as to a light that shineth in a dark place.’”

“But, mother, when are we going to begin to mention the instances we have found of the fulfilment of prophecy?” asked Fanny. “I am afraid we shall not have half time enough this evening.”

“No, my dear, I think not; and we will therefore postpone this part of the subject till next Sabbath. Do not look so disappointed; you will have more time to collect and arrange your illustrations; and I wish to give you one direction about it. You may produce first whatever examples you can find of the accomplishment of scattered predictions, such as those relating to Babylon, Tyre, &c., and then place by themselves, those which relate to Christ, which you will find very numerous. Another thing: recollect that each of the books of the Bible is a distinct and independent production, the work of one author and published at one time, the whole together forming a series of successive publications, extending over a period of several thousand years. A great deal of the force of this and other arguments for the

Divine origin of the Scriptures is lost by our habit of regarding them as one book, because they happen to be bound in one volume."

"Why, what a difference it makes, even to think of it!" said Fanny. "It always seems to me as if all the Bible was written at once."

"How can you talk so, Fanny?" asked James. "You know that Moses, who wrote the first five books, was dead long before David and Isaiah, and the other prophets, lived."

"Yes, I *know* it well enough, but I never think of it. If we had each of the books of the Bible in a separate form, it would make a great difference."

CHAPTER XVIII.

EVIDENCE FROM PROPHECY, CONTINUED. — PROPHECIES
RELATING TO BABYLON AND TYRE.

“I AM sure,” said Fanny, as she seated herself, Bible in hand, the next Sabbath evening, “my head is quite confused with the number of things in it; and I have so many fulfilled prophecies to mention, that I shall not know where to begin.”

“It will, of course, be impossible,” observed her mother, “to notice all or half the examples we might like to do; we must limit ourselves to a few, and we will begin with those relating to Babylon. Fanny, you may read such passages as you have found predicting the destruction of Babylon.”

Fanny read: “And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be

inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation; neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there." (Is. 13: 19—21.) "One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to show the King of Babylon that his city is taken at one end, and that the passages are stopped, and the reeds they have burned with fire, and the men of war are affrighted." "Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will dry up her sea, and make her springs dry. And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling-place for dragons, an astonishment and a hissing, without an inhabitant. The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire. Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I shall bring upon her." (Jer. 51: 31, 32, 36, 37, 58, 64.)

“That will do, my dear,” said her mother; “we will read only as much as is necessary to our purpose, in order to save time. Now, in order that this prophecy should be proved to be from God, it is necessary that *it should have been written before the event ; that it predicts things which could not be foreseen by human sagacity ; and that it is so clear and minute as to leave no doubt whether it corresponds with the event.* As to the first point, we have abundant evidence of various kinds. That Isaiah’s prophecy was known as part of the sacred writings among the Jews in Christ’s time, is proved by his reading from it in the synagogue. And we have the testimony of Josephus, that it was known to Cyrus ; for he says that when Cyrus learned, from the book of Isaiah, that God’s will was that he should send back the Jews to their own country, and permit them to rebuild their temple, ‘an earnest desire and ambition came upon him to fulfil what was so written,’ and he obeyed accordingly.

“So much for the first point. Now, as to the second; — *could the things here predicted be foreseen by human sagacity?* And in order to answer this question, we must inquire what was the condition and appearance of Babylon at the time the prophecy was uttered. James, can you give us a description of the city?”

“It was of immense size and magnificence,” said James; “its walls are said to have been eighty-seven feet thick, and three hundred and fifty feet high, and to have been sixty miles in compass,—that is, fifteen on each side. It had a hundred gates of solid brass, twenty-five on each side, and between every two of the gates were three towers. There were fifty streets crossing each other at right angles, and so dividing the city in six hundred and seventy-six squares. It was situated on each side of the river Euphrates, and the two parts were connected by a bridge fifty feet wide, at each end of which there was a magnificent palace. Then there were splendid hanging

gardens, filled with beautiful trees and plants, and watered by aqueducts."

"It had also," said his mother, "a very extensive commerce in all manner of rich goods and precious stones ; it was situated in a rich and fertile country ; and by all these advantages, joined to its high and massive walls, it seemed to bid defiance to the ravages of time, and the attacks of enemies. Although in Isaiah's time it had not reached its full magnificence, yet even then it well merited the titles it received, — *the great city, the praise of the whole earth, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, the lady of kingdoms*. Was there anything, then, to make it probable to human foresight that all this beauty and strength should come to nought, and utterly cease to exist?"

"Certainly not," was the reply of James and Fanny.

"Now, then, let us compare the prediction with the fulfilment, and see if the agreement is minute and clear.

"Your first quotation, Fanny, was from

the thirteenth chapter of Isaiah, beginning at the nineteenth verse. In the seventeenth verse, it is said, 'Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it.' Now, this is a very remarkable passage, on many accounts. In the first place, the Medes were not, at this time, a separate and independent nation. Media was a province of Assyria, of which Babylon was the capital, and thus tributary to the very city which it was predicted it should destroy. This prediction was, therefore, in the highest degree *improbable*. Then it is said that they 'shall not regard silver or gold,' — a very unlikely thing, as most conquerors are influenced by the hope of plunder. But Xenophon makes Cyrus begin a speech to his soldiers thus: 'Ye Medes and others who now hear me, I well know that you have not accompanied me in this expedition with the hope of acquiring wealth.' Again, Xenophon says of Cyrus, 'So little did he regard silver, or delight in gold, that

Cræsus told him that by his liberality he would make himself poor. *The Medes possessed, in this respect, the spirit of their chief.*"

"How very remarkable!" said Fanny.

"Now, then, to go on. It is predicted that Babylon 'shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah;' that is, it shall be completely and hopelessly destroyed. By what means was this most unlikely prediction accomplished?"

"Cyrus turned the course of the river Euphrates, and entered under the gates," said Fanny. "But, mother, one of the passages I have marked relates to that. It says here, 'Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron, and I will give thee the

treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places.' ”

“ Yes, there will be many points to notice in that passage, when we come to consider the fulfilment. But this capture of the city by Cyrus was only the first step in its downfall. But Cyrus did not destroy the city ; he left its walls and towers, and magnificent decorations, untouched. It afterwards rebelled against his successor, Darius, and was taken by him a second time, in a manner not less remarkable than at first by Cyrus. Zopyrus, one of the chief nobles of Persia, cut off his own nose and ears, and then presented himself to the Babylonians as a deserter from Darius, who had mutilated him, he pretended, in that horrible manner. He was admitted by degrees into the confidence of the inhabitants, and when it was supposed his fidelity had been fully tested, he was intrusted with the command of the army, and the guardianship of the walls. He then opened the gates to Darius, who, having become master of the city, lev-

elled the walls, took away the gates, and ordered three thousand of the nobility to be crucified. This was the second step in its downfall."

"That nobleman, that Zopyrus, must have been strongly attached to Darius, I should think," observed Fanny. "But what happened to poor Babylon next, mother?"

"Next it was captured by Alexander the Great; afterwards by Antigonos, and then by Antiochus the Great; finally, by the Parthians. Other circumstances contributed to its downfall. Cyrus transferred the seat of empire from Babylon to Susa, or Shushan, which became the capital. Seleucus founded the city of Seleucia, on the Tigris, near by, and thither many of the inhabitants of Babylon removed. Cyrus, by turning the course of the river, had converted the country round into a vast morass, unhealthy and incapable of cultivation. Thus Babylon declined, till it became gradually a great desert, and finally a hunting-ground

for the Persian monarchs. In 1322, Sir John Maundeville, an Asiatic traveller, says, 'Babylon is in the grete deserts of Arabye, upon the way as men gow towards the kyngdome of Caldee. But it is full longe sithe any man durste myle to the toure, for it is alle deserte and full of dragons and great serpentes, and fulle dyverse veneymous bestes all abouten.' "

"Mother," said Fanny, "may I read this account of the present state of Babylon from my large Bible Dictionary?"

"Let me see it, my dear. No, it will occupy too much time to read the whole of that aloud. But I will read some of the predictions, one clause at a time, and then you or James may read the evidence of its fulfilment from some of the books of travels I see you have collected there. And first I read, *It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation.*"

James read: "The eye wanders over a barren desert, in which the ruins are nearly

the only indication that it had ever been inhabited. It is impossible to behold this scene and not be reminded how exactly the predictions of Isaiah and Jeremiah have been fulfilled."

Fanny: "The ground is low and marshy, and presents not the slightest vestige of former buildings of any description whatever."

"*'Neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there.'* How could this be fulfilled, when the region had formerly been so fertile and rich in pasturage?"

"I suppose, because it was so marshy," said James. "Mr. Rich says, 'The ruins of Babylon are inundated so as to render many parts of them inaccessible.' And it says in Porter's travels, 'On this part of the plain all seemed equally *naked of vegetation*, the whole ground appearing as if it had been washed over and over again, by the coming and receding waters, till every bit of genial soil was swept away; its half clay, half sandy surface, being left in ridgy

streaks, like what is often seen on the flat shores of the sea, after the retreating of the tide.' ”

“ And then, about the Arabian not pitching tent there,” said Fanny, “ here is something. Captain Miguan was accompanied by *six Arabs*, completely armed, but he could not induce them to remain at night, from the apprehension of evil spirits. And the missionary Wolfe says, ‘ I inquired of them whether the Arabs ever pitched their tents among the ruins of Babylon. No, said they ; the Arabs believe that the ghost of Nimrod walks amidst them in the darkness, and no Arab would venture on so hazardous an experiment.’ ”

“ But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there, and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures ; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there.”

“ Mother, what are meant by *satyrs* ? ” asked Fanny.

“ It is not certainly known, but probably

the word should have been rendered *wild goats* or *fawns*."

James read : "These caverns, over which the chambers of majesty may have been spread, are now the refuge of jackals and other savage animals. The mouths of their entrances are strewed with the bones of sheep and goats, and the loathsome smell that issues from most of them is sufficient warning not to proceed into the den."

"That will do, my dear, though I see you have many other passages marked to read. But we cannot spend all our time on one prophecy, however interesting. We must not, however, pass over the passage you read, Fanny, from the forty-first of Isaiah, relating to Cyrus, because it is especially remarkable. Here, you see, is a man prophesied of *by name* more than a hundred years before he was born, and his character and acts are foretold. We can stay only to notice one or two remarkably minute predictions in this passage. God says, 'to open before him the two-leaved gates, and

the gates shall not be shut.' Do you know how this was fulfilled?"

"I was wondering about that," said Fanny, "because it looks as if the gates were left open; but you know Cyrus entered *under* the gates, in the bed of the river."

"Yes, he entered in that way; but we learn from Herodotus that this did not give him access to the city, for there were walls on each side of the river Euphrates, with gates opening to the river from the streets. If these gates had been closed, *as they usually were at night*, Cyrus and his army would have been shut up in the bed of the river. These gates, as well as the gates of the palace, were left open on that night of feasting and revelry, and thus this remarkable prediction was fully verified."

"I noticed one thing," said James; "it says, 'I will loose the loins of kings;' and in Daniel, when Belshazzar saw the writing on the wall, it is stated that 'the joints of his loins were loosed.'"

“How many wonderful coincidences!” said Fanny.

“Yes,” replied her mother; “this one prophecy, were there no other, would be amply sufficient to prove the Divine original of the book from which it is taken. It was written at least one hundred and seventy years before its accomplishment, and when there was the strongest improbability that it ever would be accomplished. It is so minute and particular, that its fulfilment cannot be set down to accident, or styled fancied and imaginary. It has been remarked by Dr. Barnes, that a man might, with as much probability, predict now that London, Paris, New York or Philadelphia, will be the residence of ‘wild beasts,’ ‘satyrs,’ and ‘dragons,’ as the same prediction could have been made respecting Babylon, at the time when Isaiah uttered his prophecy. What other examples have you found among cities or nations?”

“Tyre and Nineveh,” said Fanny.

“And Egypt,” added James. “But,

mother," continued he, "I wish you would let me read just one or two passages more about Babylon, because they are very curious, and relate to some points we have not noticed."

"Very well, my dear ; read them."

"There is one which shows *how* the city would be taken, by the river Euphrates being turned aside ; and another which tells that it would happen while the inhabitants were holding a feast, and were drunk, so that they could not defend themselves. '*A drought is upon her waters, and they shall be dried up. I will dry up her sea, and make her springs dry. And I will make drunk her princes, and her wise men, her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men ; and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the King whose name is the Lord of hosts. One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to show the King of Babylon that his city is taken at one end.*' "

"Yes, they are very striking passages,"

observed his mother. “And now I think we will look at the prophecies relating to Tyre. Fanny, you may read some of the most striking of them.”

Fanny read the following passages :—
“Thus saith the Lord God ; behold, I am against thee, oh Tyrus, and will cause *many nations* to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers : I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea : for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God ; and it shall become a spoil to the nations. And they shall make a spoil of thy riches, and make a prey of thy merchandise : and they shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy pleasant houses ; and they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water. And I will make thee like the top of a rock : thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon ; thou shalt be built no

more; for I the Lord have spoken it." Ezek. 26.

"And then," continued Fanny, "the whole of the next chapter is filled with descriptions of the riches and glory of Tyre, and of the lamentation that should be made over her. 'And all that handle the oar, the mariners and all the pilots of the sea, shall come down from their ships; they shall stand upon the land, and shall cause their voice to be heard against thee, and shall cry bitterly, and shall cast up dust upon their heads; they shall wallow themselves in the ashes; and they shall make themselves utterly bald for thee, and gird them with sackcloth, and they shall weep for thee with bitterness of heart and with bitter wailing; and in their wailing they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and lament over thee, saying, What city is like Tyrus, like the destroyed in the midst of the sea?'"

"That will do, Fanny. Now for the fulfilment. James, what have you to say?"

"Here is a passage from Maundrell," said

James: “ ‘This city, standing in the sea upon a peninsula, promises, at a distance, something very magnificent. But when you come to it, you find no similitude of that glory for which it was so renowned in ancient times, and which the prophet Ezekiel describes. On the north side it has an old Turkish ungarrisoned castle; besides which you see nothing here but a mere Babel of broken walls, pillars, vaults, &c., *there being not so much as one entire house left.* Its present inhabitants are only a few poor wretches, harboring themselves in the vaults, and subsisting chiefly upon fishing, who seem to be preserved in this place by Divine Providence, as a visible argument how God has fulfilled his word concerning Tyre, *that it should be as the top of a rock, a place for fishers to dry their nets on.*’ ”

“Was this ruin effected all at once, or gradually?” asked his mother.

“Not all at once, I believe. I know Nebuchadnezzar destroyed it the first time, and I believe Alexander the Great did again.”

“Yes, and after Alexander’s time, it fell successively into the hands of the Ptolemies, the Kings of Syria, the Saracens, the Christians, the Mamelukes and the Turks. So that the prediction, ‘I will raise up *many nations against thee*,’ is verified. A recent traveller remarks, ‘There are no signs of the ancient city; and as it is a sandy shore, the face of everything is altered, and the great aqueduct in many parts is almost buried in the sand.’

“Now, this entire destruction of an opulent, powerful, and commercial city, so favorably situated as was Tyre, is something as improbable as was the ruin of Babylon, and furnishes an evidence of the truth of prophecy not to be set aside.”

“And now, shall we go on to Nineveh, mother?” asked Fanny.

“No, I think we will not take up any more examples to-night. One remark, however, I will make about Nineveh. The very recent discoveries of Mr. Layard, of whom you have heard, have abundantly confirmed

all the Scripture accounts of the greatness and magnificence of that city, and it may be expected that his further researches will throw new light upon many passages of prophecy. Since his return to Nineveh, he has found a large room filled with what appear to be the archives of the empire, ranged in tables of terra cotta, the writings being as perfect as when they were first stamped. The rest of the building had been destroyed by fire, but this room was uninjured. It is supposed that this and the other surrounding buildings, in which the marks of fire are observed, were consumed when the Medes took the city, six hundred and six years before Christ. And this room has been kept sealed up during all these intervening centuries, to be opened now, in the Providence of God, and made to render up its contents, for the purpose of throwing new light on the word of God."

"I hope I shall read Mr. Layard's accounts," said James.

"It will be a good book for you to read

aloud to mother and me, perhaps," suggested Fanny.

"The *history of the Jews* furnishes many wonderful instances of the fulfilment of prophecy," observed her mother. "But we must pass them by, and go on to the prophecies about Christ."

CHAPTER XIX.

PROPHECIES RELATING TO CHRIST.

“IN what order shall we read our passages, mother?” asked Fanny. “Shall we begin with those in Genesis, and so go on through the Bible?”

“No, I think a different arrangement will be better. I will ask questions, and either of you may read passages in answer. What was predicted in regard to the *time* of Messiah’s birth?”

“I have no passage in answer to that,” said Fanny.

“I have one,” said James; “here it is, in Daniel; — ‘Know, therefore, and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks and three score and two weeks.’”

“Very well,” said his mother; “that is

the most explicit of any of the predictions relating to time. Christ's coming was to be seventy weeks after the decree of Cyrus to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem. But there are other prophecies which help to fix the time: it was to be when the sceptre was departing from Judah (Gen. 49: 10); it was to be while the second temple was standing (Haggai 2: 7, 9, and Mal. 3: 1); and while there was a general expectation of him (Haggai and Malachi). That such an expectation existed at the time of his coming, both among the Jews and other nations, we know from various sources. It is proved by the coming of the wise men from the East, saying, 'Where is he that is born King of the Jews?' and by the Pharisees going to John to ask whether he were the Christ. What is predicted of the *place* of his birth?"

Fanny. "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel."

“And observe,” said her mother, “how this was accomplished. Joseph and Mary did not live in Bethlehem; and Christ would not have been born there, but for the decree of Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be taxed or enrolled, which obliged them to go up to Bethlehem, just at that time. But, next, of what *family* was Christ to be born?”

“Of the family of David,” replied Fanny. — “‘And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots, and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him.’”

“Yes, and it was also foretold that he should be descended from Abraham,” said James; “for God said to Abraham, ‘In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed;’ and Christ said, ‘Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad.’”

“What was to be remarkable in the *manner* of his birth?”

“He was to be born of a virgin:—
‘Therefore the Lord himself shall give you

a sign: Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.' ”

“What were some of the particular events of his life that formed the subject of prophecy?”

“It was predicted that he should enter Jerusalem riding on an ass,” said Fanny: “‘Behold thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.’ ”

“It was foretold that he should work miracles,” added James: “‘Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped; then shall the lame man leap as the hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing.’ ”

“His being betrayed for thirty pieces of silver was foretold,” said Fanny; “here is the place:—‘So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter; a goodly price that I was prized at of them.

And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord.' ”

“The vinegar and gall they gave him to drink on the cross are mentioned,” said James: “ ‘They gave me, also, gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.’ ”

“And the very words he uttered on the cross, too,” observed Fanny: — “ ‘My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?’ ”

“Was there any prediction relating to his garments?” asked her mother.

“O yes! in the same psalm it says, — ‘They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.’ ”

“What was predicted as to the manner in which he should receive his sufferings, and the taunts and revilings of his enemies?”

“ ‘He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep

before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.' ”

“ Was anything foretold in relation to the *place of his burial* ? ”

“ Not that I know of,” replied Fanny.

“ Why, yes,” said James; “ it is said here, in the same chapter of Isaiah you were reading from, ‘ He made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death; ’ and you know he was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, who was a rich man, I suppose. And it says in the same chapter, ‘ he was numbered with the transgressors; ’ which refers to his being crucified between two thieves.”

“ His side was pierced by one of the soldiers; and it says, in Zachariah, ‘ They shall look on me whom they have pierced, ’ ” said Fanny.

“ That prediction,” observed her mother, “ as well as the one relating to the parting of his garments, was fulfilled by the Romans; and it cannot therefore be pretended that it was intentionally fulfilled by the

agents in it. Nor can this be asserted of other events, in which the *Jews* were the actors; for they would not knowingly have done anything to mark out Jesus as the Messiah who had been foretold. Here we see one of the uses of the obscurity of prophecy."

"Yes," said Fanny, "I see that."

"The *manner of Christ's death* was in accordance with his own predictions, and not what would have been naturally expected from the nature of his pretended offence. He was accused of *blasphemy*, the punishment for which, by the Jewish law, was stoning; and with this the Jews repeatedly threatened him. John, 8: 59, it is said, 'Then took they up stones to cast at him;' and in the tenth chapter of John, 'Then the Jews took up stones again to cast at him.' When Jesus asked, 'Why do ye stone me?' they replied, 'For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy.' Yet he was finally delivered up to the Romans, and crucified, in fulfilment of

what Christ had predicted to his disciples :
'Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall *deliver him to the Gentiles*, to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him; and the third day he shall rise again.' "

"It seems strange," remarked Fanny, "that when the Jews were expecting a Messiah, and when so many prophecies directly pointed out Christ, they should have rejected him."

"It is strange, and would be unaccountable, but for the wickedness of the human heart. The secret of their rejection of Christ was, that he was not the kind of Messiah they wanted. They wished for a great temporal prince, who would deliver them from the Roman yoke, and exalt them to their former place as a nation, while he would wink at their moral corruption, and allow them to live as they liked. A poor, obscure, humble, patient, and holy Messiah,

requiring from them the self-denial, spirituality, and zeal for God, of which he set them the example, was not at all to their minds."

"But what did they suppose the prophecies meant which predicted just such things of him?"

"That question it is impossible to answer. They probably overlooked and neglected that class of prophecies, and occupied themselves with those only which spoke of Messiah as a prince and a ruler. And here I want you to observe a striking fact. The prophecies relating to Christ describe him in his two states of humiliation and exaltation, and appear, before their fulfilment, to be absolutely irreconcilable with each other. You may read some of the predictions which speak of him in his state of humiliation and suffering."

James and Fanny read the following verses: — "He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground; he hath no form nor comeliness,

and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief: and we hid, as it were, our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. His visage was marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men. And he shall be for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence, to both houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip; they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. — I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws, and thou hast brought me into the dust of death. For

dogs have compassed me; the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me; they pierced my hands and my feet."

"Now turn to some of the passages which speak of the Messiah in his character of prince and ruler."

"There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel." —

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even forever." —

"Out of thee (Bethlehem) shall come forth unto me he that is to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from old, even from everlasting." — "The Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I

shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel."

"You observe what opposite and apparently incompatible qualities and characters are brought together in these passages; and how strong the evidence they furnish, by their fulfilment in the person of Christ, of their being dictated by Him who could alone foretell the end from the beginning, and who saith, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.'"

"I do not see how the Jews *could* understand such contradictory prophecies," said Fanny. "Perhaps they were not so much to blame, after all."

"They were to blame for having a wrong spirit and temper. If they had desired to know the truth, they would have been led into it by the Spirit of God, as were those who became Christ's disciples. But I have a passage marked here to read to you, some

parts of which you may not fully understand, but whose eloquence and beauty I think you will in a measure appreciate.

“ ‘ But not only are the long succession of prophecies and the independence in the delivery of them to be noticed ; we are to observe, further, as the inimitable Pascal remarks, that here is an entire people who announce the Messiah by all their institutions, usages, laws, ceremonies, the whole of their religion ; this people subsist from the time of Moses to Christ, to give in a body their testimony to their assurances of his coming, from which nothing can divert them, however threatened or persecuted. Here is a national and religious polity, all the parts of which are symbols, in one way or other, of the kingdom of the Messiah. The priesthood, the tabernacle, the temple, the sacrifices, the festivals, are all representative of the same blessings, and unite with the predictions of the prophets to point out the same extraordinary person. * * * * *

To say that all these wonderful predictions,

accomplished in the Messiahship of Christ, prove a prophetic inspiration, and the truth of the revelation which it communicates, is to say little; — they pour upon that revelation, and upon the Saviour, a flood of evidence and of glory, which is entirely in harmony with the unparalleled dignity of his person, and the infinite value of the blessings he came to procure for man.'

"I hope you perceive the force of these remarks, and the irresistible weight of the addition furnished by the types and shadows of the Jewish ritual to the chain of prophetic announcements of our Lord."

"Yes, mother, I see it," said James; "the types and sacrifices were a kind of standing prophecy of Christ."

"And how much plainer the prophecies become, as we go on!" said Fanny; "that first one given to Adam, 'The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head,' was very obscure."

"And now, my dear children, we have examined some of the principal *evidences*

on which rests our belief in the Divine authority of the Scriptures, and of the religion they reveal. We first saw that a revelation was *needed*, and, because needed, therefore *probable*. We next inquired whether the Bible is such a revelation as we might expect Jehovah to give; and found that it was so, inasmuch as it harmonizes perfectly with the revelations made in nature and providence, and all its parts harmonize with each other. It is characterized by a Divine majesty and sublimity; it is perfectly and admirably adapted to the wants of man, throwing a new light on all his duties and relations, and revealing a mode of pardon and of regeneration infinitely above human thought or reason. We found this admirable system originating in the life, miracles, death and resurrection, of the Son of God, whose claims to this Divine title were substantiated by a life of spotless perfection, by miracles of transcendent glory, by the transforming effects of his doctrines on those who embraced them, and

by a chain of prophecies, extending over a period of four thousand years, interwoven with a complicated and magnificent system of types and ceremonials, all converging and terminating in him, as their centre and end. The weight of evidence is irresistible; it is such as would convince us, — nay, a thousandth part of it would convince us, in any matter relating to our temporal interests. **THE BIBLE IS TRUE.** There is a heaven and a hell; there is a law by which we must be judged; there is a Saviour ready to redeem us. It is a matter of life and death to each of us; for ‘every one of us must give account of himself to God.’ Let this blessed Book, my dear children, become your guide and your meditation; let its instructions be written upon the table of your hearts; ‘so shall you find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man.’ ”

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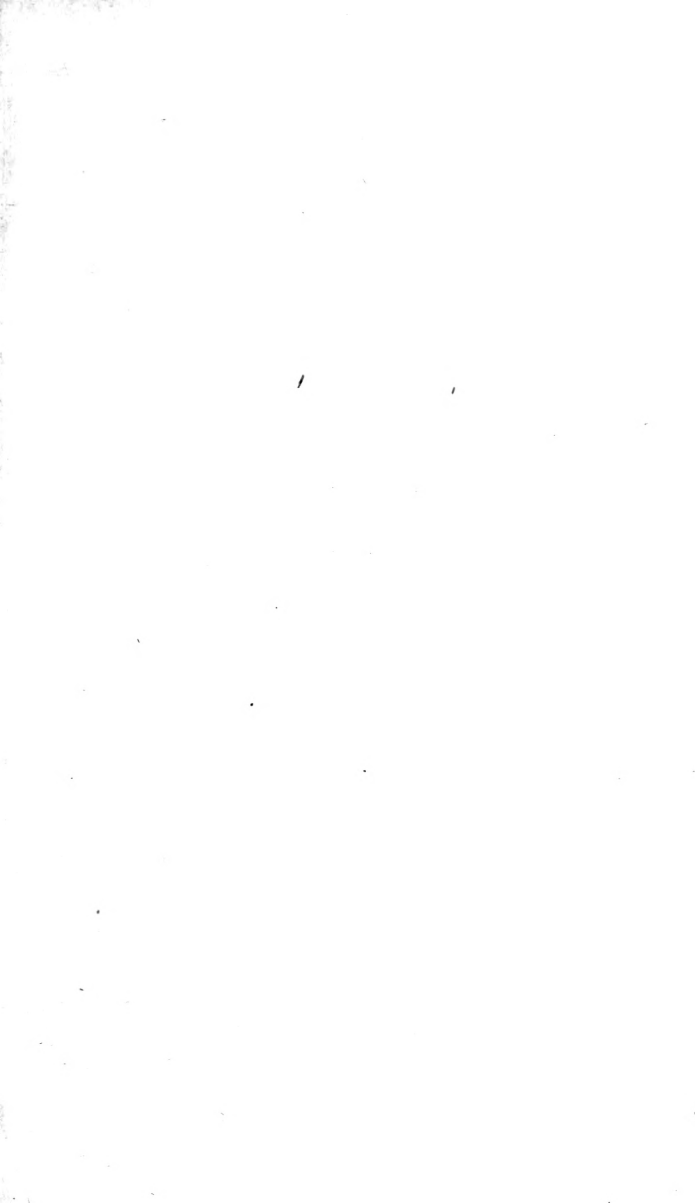
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